

ABSTRACT

Christopher P. McCabe. THE DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF TAR-PAMLICO RIVER MARITIME COMMERCE AND ITS IMPACT UPON REGIONAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS. (Under the direction of Dr. Wade G. Dudley) Department of History, April 2007.

From prehistoric times through the mid-twentieth century, inhabitants of the Tar-Pamlico River basin have utilized its numerous tributaries as corridors of transportation, communication, and trade. As natural, political, economic, and technological influences varied over time, maritime traffic generally increased or decreased accordingly, often affecting patterns of local settlement. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the historical function of maritime commerce on the Tar-Pamlico River, from inception through eventual decline, and interpret the effects of its associated processes on human settlement in Beaufort, Pitt, and Edgecombe counties. The chronological examination uses historical, demographical, archaeological, and statistical analyses to explore the perception that commercial maritime activity was the driving force behind community development on North Carolina's lower Tar and upper Pamlico Rivers from Bath northwest to Tarboro.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF TAR-PAMLICO RIVER
MARITIME COMMERCE AND ITS IMPACT UPON
REGIONAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

A Thesis

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the Faculty of the Department of History

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by

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Dedicated to my mother and the memory of my father
with love and heartfelt gratitude.

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CHAPTER ONE

PIONEERING NATURE'S DEVICE

The Tar-Pamlico River

Anyone traveling across the landmass of present-day North Carolina would most certainly experience a distinct sense of cultural and geographic diversity. Communities of the Tar Heel state are as unique as the landscape is varied. From the western Blue Ridge Mountains, through the central Piedmont and Sandhills, to the Coastal Plains that lead to the islands of the Outer Banks, the state offers residents an abundance of potential habitats. Arriving at these destinations was not always as straightforward as it is today, however. Present-day communities have unparalleled access to innovative technologies that enables logistical infrastructures designed to suit individual needs. In stark contrast, patterns of primitive settlement unfolded primarily through natural, and often arduous, transportation systems.

Before the advent of internal combustion engines and paved roadway systems, inhabitants of North Carolina facilitated transportation, migration, and settlement by using the region's extensive network of coastal and inland waterways. The state lays claim to a total of seventeen major river watersheds within six separate physiographic zones.¹ Each individual watershed is distinctive in its own right; however, river systems located in the easternmost portion of the state provided early colonial settlers and their descendents a bounty of crucial inland passages of communication and trade. This

¹ John Fels, *North Carolina Watersheds* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension Service, 1997).

sprawling coastal arrangement consists of an assortment of rivers, streams, swamps, estuaries, and sounds, each presumably utilized by the region's earliest inhabitants. The Tar-Pamlico River was a central geographic element of this basic transportation structure and enabled over 3.5 million acres of wilderness to be opened for settlement and expansion between the Roanoke and Neuse rivers basins (Figure 1).

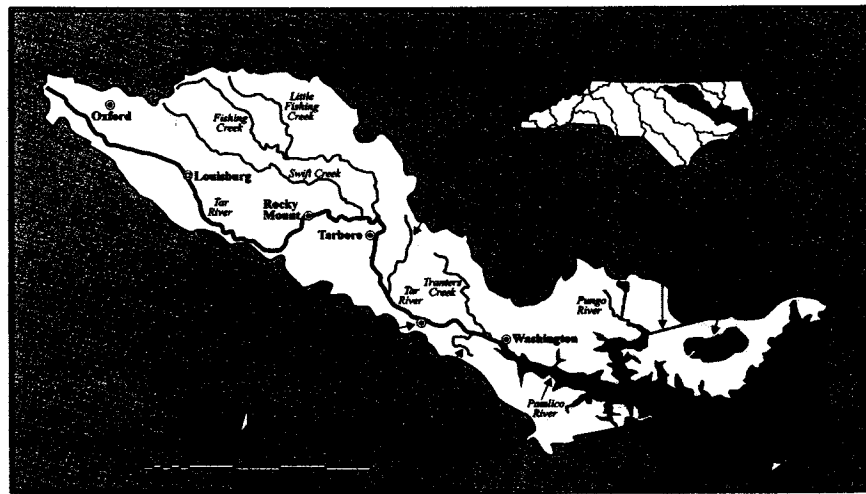


Figure 1: The Tar-Pamlico River Basin.²

The waters of the Tar-Pamlico River system lie entirely within the boundaries of present-day North Carolina, and during the years just prior to European settlement meandered toward the southeast much as they do today, though somewhat less tame.³ The river consists of two distinctive sections: the westernmost freshwater Tar River and the more easterly estuarine Pamlico River, with demarcation occurring in the vicinity of contemporary Washington, North Carolina. The river's headwaters originate on the Piedmont plateau of present-day Person County and run for approximately 180 miles

²Paul Ferguson, *Paddling Eastern North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: Pocosin Press, 2002), 353.

³Ibid., 352.

through Granville, Vance, Franklin, Nash, Edgecombe, Pitt, and Beaufort counties before passing from the Inner to the Outer Coastal Plain at the Suffolk Scarp, the remnants of an ancient Pleistocene barrier island.⁴ At this point, the river widens into a tidal estuary, and becomes known exclusively as the Pamlico. It continues onward for an additional thirty-seven miles before ultimately merging with the increasing depth and salinity of Pamlico Sound. Together with adjoining Albermarle Sound, these two bodies of water create the second largest estuary in the country (Chesapeake Bay is the first).⁵ The mouth of the river is located less than thirty miles from Ocracoke Inlet, which leads to the Atlantic Ocean.⁶ Ocracoke Inlet was deep enough to remain the primary shipping channel between the Atlantic and Pamlico Sound until September 1846, when powerful storm surges from a severe hurricane formed additional straits that would later become known as Oregon and the new Hatteras Inlets.⁷

Eastern North Carolina is generally known for a comfortable, temperate climate, nevertheless, the region remains notorious for seasonal cycles of hot, humid weather interspersed with strong coastal storms and tropical hurricanes, usually accompanied by powerful wind-driven surges and flooding. The Tar-Pamlico normally flows at its highest levels during the winter months and at its lowest through mid-summer. During severe storm events, water levels may rise well above flood stage at any time of year.

⁴ *Water Resources of North Carolina: Tar-Pamlico River Basin* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Water Resources, Inlets and Coastal Waterways, 1958), 1; C. Scott Hardaway, "Shoreline Erosion and Its Relationship to the Geology of the Pamlico River Estuary" (Master's thesis, East Carolina University, 1980), 2. The Inner Coastal Plain lies in the areas between the fall-line and the Suffolk Scarp, which in North Carolina runs north-south from Gates to Brunswick Counties.

⁵ Ferguson, 353.

⁶ *North Carolina's Coastal Boating Guide: 2003-2004* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Transportation and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, 2003).

⁷ Jay Barnes, *North Carolina's Hurricane History*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 37.

This unpredictability and opposite extremes of low water and powerful freshets, combined with shifting sedimentation, sand bars, and plentiful tree snags, make draft navigation on the river challenging at best and practically impossible at worst.

Numerous tributaries sustain water levels along the river. The Pamlico's largest is the Pungo River, located on its north side, twelve miles east of Bath.⁸ Other supporting waterways include North, Bath, Upper Goose, and Broad Creeks on the Pamlico's northern side, and Goose, South, and Durham Creeks on its southern shore. Leading tributaries of the Tar River include Tranters Creek northwest of Washington, Town Creek near Old Sparta, Fishing Creek northwest of Tarboro (its largest), and Swift Creek seven miles further upstream. The entire river basin flows through fifty-five separate municipalities and is bordered by developed urban areas, cultivated croplands, sediment banks, wooded floodplains, and intermittent grass marshes. Runoff from these land areas also adds supplementary water volume and considerable sedimentation into the path of the river.⁹

The Tar-Pamlico descends over 550 vertical feet from beginning to end, with 85 percent of the total drop occurring in the segment lying above the geographic fall-line at Rocky Mount, and the remainder during its run along the Inner and Outer Coastal Plains.¹⁰ North Carolina's fall-line is defined by relatively steep rocky terrain meeting a more level, sandy loam. Rivers and streams tend to be rather dynamic at such points, and oftentimes it is the maximum limit of upstream navigation. The upper segment of the Tar

⁸ *North Carolina Atlas & Gazetteer: Topo Maps of the Entire State*, 3rd ed. (Yarmouth, ME: Delorme Company, 1997), 67.

⁹ Tar-Pamlico Basinwide Water Quality Plan. (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Water Quality, Water Quality Section, 1999), 120.

¹⁰ *Water Resources of North Carolina: Tar-Pamlico River Basin*, 1.

River is a swift moving, gradually widening, course of rapids, flats, and shallows; while the lower navigational corridor generally consists of unhurried water flowing over relatively flat geographic features with little dramatic elevation change. The Tar-Pamlico River's watershed also includes Lake Mattamuskeet, the state's largest natural lake, and covers a total area of over 5,500 square miles, measuring fourth largest in North Carolina.¹¹ Other significant geological features along the Tar-Pamlico are (from southeast to northwest):

- Mouth of the river (near Pamlico Point)
- Indian Island (10 miles west of the river's mouth)
- Blounts Bay (7 miles southeast of Washington, NC)
- Chocowinity Bay (2 miles southeast of Washington, NC)
- Grandpap Island (0.5 mile southeast of Washington, NC)
- "The Castle" (Castle Island) (near the Washington, NC waterfront)
- Shop Cove (1 mile northwest of Washington, NC)
- Martin Bay (2 miles northwest of Washington, NC)
- Rainbow Banks (4 miles southeast of Greenville, NC)
- Clark Banks (near Greenville, NC)
- Three-mile wide, east-facing horseshoe bend (surrounds Tarboro, NC)
- Rapids and waterfalls (near the fall-line at Rocky Mount, NC)
- The Tar River Reservoir (southwest of Rocky Mount, NC)
- River Headwaters (in Person County, near Denny Store, NC)

There is no clear origin to the naming of the river segment known as the Tar. Before being separated into its two contemporary designations, the river appeared as "Pamtecough R." on both Surveyor General John Lawson's 1709 Map of the Carolinas, and Geographer Herman Moll's map of 1729 (the latter with a slight spelling variation).¹² Today, many local residents believe that the name is related to the area's celebrated abundance of pine tree byproducts, such as tar resin, pitch, and distilled turpentine, which

¹¹ Fels.

¹² John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, rep. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), xxxviii.; William C. Fleetwood, Jr., *Tidecraft: The Boats of South Carolina, Georgia, and Northeastern Florida, 1550-1950* (Tybee Island, GA: WBG Marine Press, 1995), 20.

were once produced in large quantities and shipped outbound along its path. Another theory exists that "Tar" is the corruption of the Native American word "Tor-paeo" (meaning unknown) found on a 1672 map by German traveler John Lederer.¹³ A more optimistic speculation supports the idea that the name came from another Native American word similar to "Tau," meaning river of health or beautiful river.¹⁴ By any account, the upper waterway's current designation "Tar River" was first documented on Edward Moseley's historic map of North Carolina in 1733 (Figure 2).¹⁵



Figure 2: Detail of Moseley's 1733 map showing the name "Tar River."¹⁶

The naming of the river's lower portion "Pamlico," does not have nearly the degree of speculation attributed to it as the Tar, and was named after a southern Algonquian tribe prevalent in the area through the seventeenth century.¹⁷ Lands and waterways in proximity to Pamlico Sound were the southern-most boundaries for tribes of the Algonquin linguistic group, and it was most likely Pamlico natives who first

¹³ Bruce Cotten, "Tar River (The Name)," *The North Carolina Booklet* 19, nos. 1-2 (1919): 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66, 69; J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina*, rep. (Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc. 1979), 37.

¹⁵ Edward Moseley, "Moseley Map, 1733" (Greenville, NC: Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ John Reed Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, rep. (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), 83.

greeted settlers from the failed Roanoke Island colony in the sixteenth century. Disease brought by the encroachment of European colonists virtually eliminated most of the local Algonquian by the turn of the eighteenth century. Indian Island, near the mouth of the river, is presumed to be the last known settlement location of area Pamlico natives.¹⁸ It is possible that some surviving members coalesced within other Algonquian communities, or were integrated into the Tuscarora, an element of the Iroquois nation.

Newly arrived Europeans initially encountered close to thirty distinct Native American tribes in North Carolina, with populations varying from a few hundred to several thousand.¹⁹ In addition to the Pamlico and Tuscarora, tribes such as Bear, Chowanoc, Coree, Hatteras, Machapunga, Moratuc, Poumiack, Secotan, and other lesser recognized groups inhabited eastern portions of the region. A rich and venerable diversity exists within the native peoples of North Carolina, and clearly, the traditional methods of subsistence, trade, spiritual belief, and geographic settlement practiced by their forbears fundamentally differed from those of incoming European settlers. Unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this study to conduct a detailed investigation of the cultural and geographic complexities involved in these intricate historic relationships or those of their prehistoric ancestors.

¹⁸ Alan D. Watson, Eva C. Latham, and Patricia Samford, *Bath: The First Town in North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2005), 5.

¹⁹ Herbert R. Paschal, "The Tragedy of the North Carolina Indians," in *The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Documentary History*, ed. Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3-27.

Origins of Tar-Pamlico River Maritime Commerce

The term *maritime commerce* can be broadly defined as business transacted by means of seafaring production, shipment, navigation, or routing.²⁰ It is a process by which individuals or groups of individuals sustain, profit, or develop themselves by methods of waterborne harvest, trade, or exchange. Therefore, by definition, maritime commerce is a geographic commercial progression that has appeared in distinct cultures around the world for millennia, and indirectly one of the most influential practices relating to patterns of human migration, colonization, and settlement ever developed. Through adaptable use of both local variation and expansive global reach, it has sustained minor civilizations and also contributed to the emergence of widely powerful nation states.

Primitive examples of seafaring navigation and migration vary from the South Pacific Ocean, where mainland Asians traveled to New Guinea and Australia over 40,000 years ago, to island settlements in the Mediterranean Sea circa 8,500 BCE. This human migratory tendency to journey the world's waterways continued into the reaches of the Pacific Ocean by means of wooden rafts and outrigger canoes, and also began to appear in the Caribbean Sea, Indian Ocean, and North Atlantic throughout the subsequent millennia.²¹ Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Celtic, and African civilizations each maintained distinct cultural connections with the support of seafaring trades and traditions. By the ninth century CE, Norse nautical aptitude, commercial ambition, and prowess in armed conflict enabled expansion into geographic areas previously unknown

²⁰ Webster's II, New Riverside Dictionary, s.v. "maritime", "commerce."

²¹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 41-50, 341-342.

to their Scandinavian ancestors. Throughout the centuries that followed, eastern and western maritime technologies merged to allow the developing Spanish, Dutch, English, and French empires an ability to initiate extended non-domestic transportation and trade. Increased competition facilitated an evolving quantity of sea-worthy vessels, fueling the capacity for overseas colonization, and broadening the establishment of open-ocean routes of trade. Following the American Revolution in the eighteenth century, the United States also became heavily dependant upon the progression of naval and commercial maritime technologies for both its early development and eventual status as a global superpower. There remains little doubt that all modern global ascendancies have distinct ties to the most humble of nautical origins and are forever linked to their ancient maritime cousins.

The earliest occurrence of primitive maritime activity on the Tar-Pamlico River will most likely never be identified. Prehistoric evidence suggests that humans first inhabited eastern North Carolina during the post-glacial Paleo-Indian period (c. 10,000 - 8,000 BCE), a time of hunter-gatherer bands, substantially lower sea levels, and cooler cycles of wet and dry weather patterns.²² Evidence of human settlement remains scarce, but more artifacts dated to that period have been discovered immediately adjacent to watershed drainage areas than purely terrestrial contexts, suggesting partial reliance on existing waterways of the period. According to a comprehensive archaeological report prepared by John Bryd in 1995, all seventy-one identified sites within the present-day

²² Kenneth W. Robinson, "Archaeological Study: Widening of US-13/NC-11 from Greenville Northwest Loop (US 264 Bypass) to Bethel, and Bethel Bypass, Pitt and Edgecombe Counties, North Carolina, TIP No. R-218; State Project No. 8.1221101." (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Transportation, Division of Highways Planning and Environmental Branch, 1993), 3.

Greenville area (mostly prehistoric) were located within two-hundred meters of a stream, and most within one-hundred meters.²³ Archaeologist David Phelps documented an indigenous site in Pitt County located on a natural river levee near Greenville, signifying the importance of both geographic elevation and ease of water access.²⁴ Phelps also acknowledged the difficulty of determining actual native settlement practices due to the scarcity of existing archaeological evidence.²⁵ No clear proof of primitive maritime commerce has ever been discovered from this time period, however, it is logical to assume that human migratory patterns between seasonal hunting camps were most certainly supported by some means of fording, ferrying, or direct river transportation.

Hunter-gatherer behaviors from the Paleo-Indian period continued into the Archaic period (c.8,000-1,000 BCE) accompanied by the origins of semi-sedentary and primitive agricultural activities capable of sustaining village-like settlements.²⁶ At this time, the climates of North Carolina's coastal plains began to resemble contemporary conditions and were largely covered with tracts of deciduous woodlands, emergent pine forests, and cypress swamp. In November 1985, during a period of unusually dry conditions, archaeologists located the first of several primitive dugout canoes in Washington County's Lake Phelps (located just north of the Pamlico River watershed). Many scholars believe that natives often purposefully sank their wooden dugouts in order

²³ John E. Byrd, *An Archeological Inventory of Sites Within the City of Greenville ETJ with Site Descriptions and Predictive Model*, (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University, 1995), 15, 37-38.

²⁴ David S. Phelps, "Archaeology of the North Carolina Coast and Coastal Plains: Problems and Hypotheses," in *The Prehistory of North Carolina: An Archaeological Symposium*, ed. Mark A. Mathis and Jeffrey J. Crow. (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1983), 19-20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁶ Robinson, 4.

to preserve them for seasonal use. The largest of the Lake Phelps vessels measures over thirty feet in length and appears to have been formed by the burning, charring, and hewing of a large felled tree (Figure 3). Sixteenth century explorer and author Thomas Harriot described the probable process used to create ancient dugouts of this type in *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* published in 1588:

...the inhabitants that were near onto us do commonly make their boats or Canoes of the form of [troughs]; only with the help of fire, hatchets of stones, and shells; we have known some so great being made in that sort of one tree that they have carried well 20 men at once, besides much baggage: the timber being great, tall, straight, soft, light, & yet tough enough I think to be fit also for masts of ships.²⁷

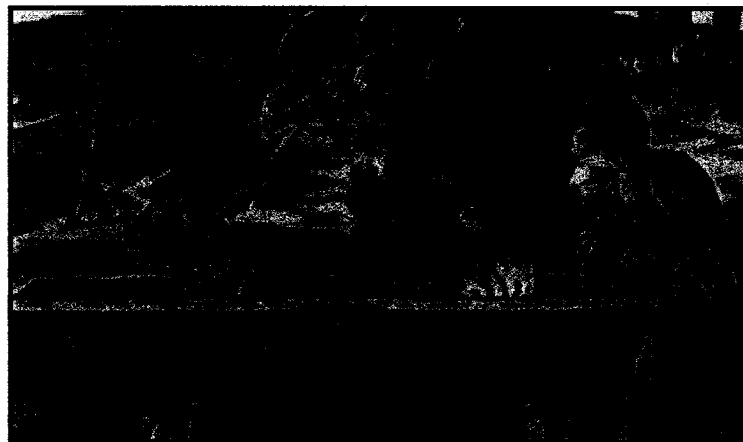


Figure 3: Theodore de Bry's engraving "The manner of making their boates". Native Americans forming canoes with fire and stone, shell, or bone scraping tools.²⁸

Also discovered nearby were the wooden remnants of fish weir supports that had decayed to an anaerobic sedimentation level within the lake bottom. Archaeologists found no precise methods of vessel propulsion or sailing technology, although it is

²⁷ Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, reprint, (Murfreesboro, NC: Johnson Publishing Company, 1969), 28. This excerpt was modified slightly to conform to current spelling practices and ease comprehension.

²⁸ W. John Faupel, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia: A Study of the de Bry Engravings* (West Sussex, England: Antique Atlas Publications, 1989), 45. In 1590, Theodore De Bry published numerous engravings based on New World drawings by John White.

commonly believed that natives drove canoes of this type by means of either poling or paddling. Radiocarbon (C-14) dating techniques, and subsequent investigations by the Underwater Archaeology Branch of North Carolina's Division of Archive and History, placed the origins of three of the nineteen dated canoes in the Late Archaic period (c.3,000-1000 BCE).²⁹ This evidence confirms early waterborne activity in the region and suggests that group sustainability was obtained not only through the pursuit of wild game animals and plant material but also by the harvest of fish, shellfish, and other associated water activities.

The regional expansion of sedentism, combined with increased development in agrarian lifestyles, gradually reduced the number of hunter-gatherer societies. By the time of the Early Woodlands period (c. 1,000 BCE - CE 300), it is thought that native peoples no longer made seasonal migrations in the pursuit of food as they slowly became more dependent upon local resources for their sustenance.³⁰ The Woodlands period is defined in part by these progressions and also by an increased and more practiced use of pottery. The period is also classified by the Deep Creek phase of archaeology in which ceramic vessels were not only plainly finished, but also paddle stamped, or impressed with cord, fabric, or netting.³¹ The original series of Deep Creek sites (the first being Parker site, 31Ed29) lie atop a sequence of terraced peninsulas along a tributary of the

²⁹ Donald G. Shomette, "A Sub-Surface Radar Exploration of Lake Phelps, North Carolina, September 1992." (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1993), 14-30.

³⁰ Robinson, 5.

³¹ Phelps, "Archaeology of the North Carolina Coast and Coastal Plains," 29-32.

Tar River, less than ten miles northeast of Tarboro. Native ceramics excavated from this location are some of the earliest ever recorded in North America.³²

Artifact assemblages are most often utilized as templates for temporal and spatial distribution patterns, and indeed chronological and geographic connections can be made in this case between the Deep Creek sites, Lake Phelps, and the Tar River watershed.³³

An associated premise can also be expressed concerning cultural priorities. The correlation between early creative design and practical use is significant in that woven nets and strung bows were basic tools of primitive survival, and their ritual application onto ceramic vessels seems to have symbolically acknowledged their critical importance. Deep Creek net and cord-impressed ceramics were found within two of the Lake Phelps dugout canoes, which dated to approximately 700 and 900 BCE respectively (Figure 4).³⁴ The use of net-impressed ceramic containers in this early canoe type lends additional credence to the significance of Native American fishing practices during the period.

The dates of the remaining Lake Phelps dugout canoes range into the Middle and Late Woodland periods (c. CE 300 - 1650), reinforcing the importance of waterborne activities in the region over an extended period of time. Also during these later periods, there was a reduction in the number of sites on lesser tributaries, and an increased assortment along larger water avenues such as the Tar-Pamlico River and Pamlico Sound.

³² David S. Phelps, *Archaeological Surveys of Four Watersheds in the North Carolina Coastal Plain*. (Raleigh: North Carolina Archaeological Council and the Archaeology Branch, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), 61- 62, 87.

³³ Several historic period dugout canoes have also been located on the Tar River. Information can be found at the Kure Beach office of the North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch in site files: "Andrew Lanier Log Canoe, #0009TRR," "Rocky Mount Canoes, 0012, 0013, 0014TRR," "Ruffin Canoe, 0016TRR," and "Lambeth Canoe, 0017TRR."

³⁴ Shomette, 15.

By the time of the Late Woodland period, Native Americans established territorial boundaries nearby, with Carolina Algonquians inhabiting the coastal tidewater regions, and groups ancestral to the Tuscarora (the Cashie phase) established upon the Inner Coastal Plain. Archeologists discovered evidence of Cashie phase settlements along both sides of the Tar-Pamlico River, and the archaeological record of the coastal Algonquian peoples (known as the Colington Phase) also represents multiple village types situated upon waterfront terrain.

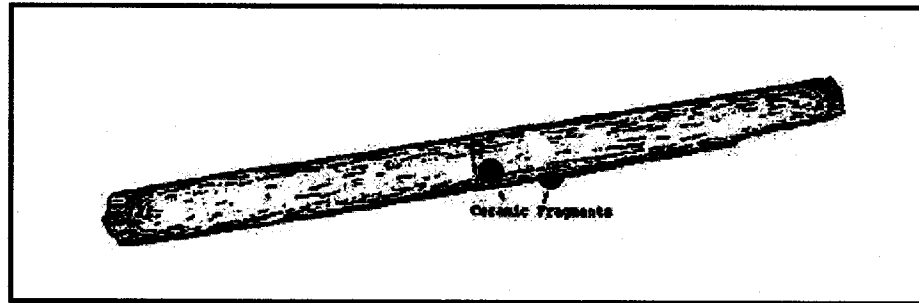


Figure 4: Plan view of Lake Phelps dugout canoe site #0002PHL. Vessel remains measure thirty feet in length.³⁵

More importantly, archaeologists discovered Colington phase artifacts in Cashie settlements, and vice versa, signifying a regional association based upon trade.³⁶ With their close proximity to waterways, and efficient use of watercraft for subsistence fishing and trade, these Native American groups surely possessed the fundamental characteristics of maritime commerce (Figure 5). It is readily apparent that not only agricultural development, but also waterborne skills, played significant roles in settlement preferences over time. Furthermore, it can be argued that only through the formation of rudimentary

³⁵ Shomette, 17.

³⁶ William G. Haag, *The Archaeology of Coastal North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 47-60; Loretta Lautzenheiser, "Archaeological Survey of US-64 Relocation, Tarboro to Parmele, Edgecombe, Martin, and Pitt Counties, North Carolina, R-2111" (Tarboro, NC: Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., 1989), 11-12.

maritime commerce, in combination with other evolutionary conditions, were native Carolinians able to arrive at this stage of development. Evolution bestowed purpose; survival provided incentive; nature offered nourishment and tools, and maritime activity facilitated progress.

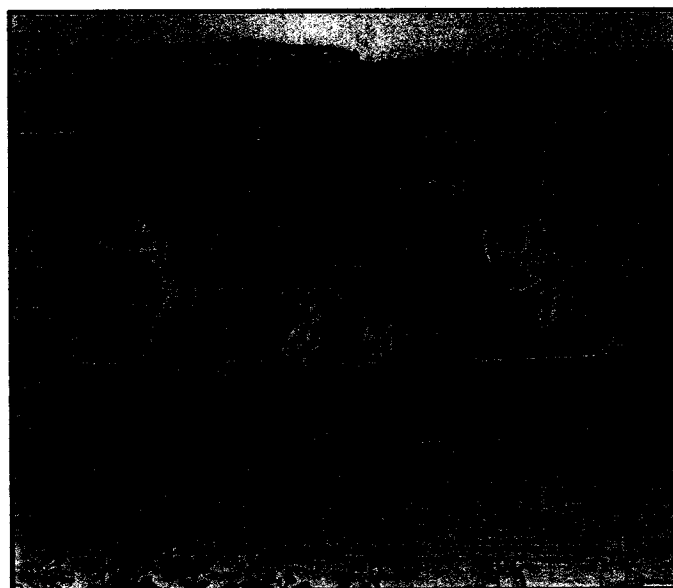


Figure 5: Theodore de Bry's engraving "The Manner of Fishing in Virginia."³⁷

Data related to native Carolinian populations prior to European contact are largely unknown, however several theories exist. Thomas Ross, in his book *American Indians in North Carolina*, provides a brief list of four expert approximations on Native-American population immediately prior to first contact with European settlers:

[James] Mooney estimates that "in 1584, before European diseases dissipated the population there were approximately 17,800 Indians upon the Carolina coastal Plains...." However, Lawrence Lee, the noted historian, estimates that there were 30,000 at the time of European colonization. Peter Wood, a Duke University professor and nationally recognized authority on colonial populations, estimates that the population was "a minimum of 50,000 and perhaps [more]." That figure, as are all others, is subject to considerable debate. In this book, it is estimated that

³⁷ Faupel, 47.

about 50,000 Indians lived in the entire state [of North Carolina] at the time of contact.³⁸

According to Henry Dobyns, Native American population went unchecked as birth rates exceeded death rates for thousands of years prior to the initial effects of European contact.³⁹ Furthermore, he speculated that indigenous populations grew at rates consistent with what local environmental systems could support. This particular version of "carrying capacity" is generally disputed as feasible but extremely improbable, and like many other population theories regarding Native Americans, remains the subject of significant debate.⁴⁰ Researchers recognize that the total native population is simply not known, therefore, many scholars decline to speculate regarding precise figures. No matter the total numbers, evidence has determined that native Carolinian linguistics, subsistence practices, and traditional culture were all highly developed and notably complex by the time European settlers first arrived on the outer barrier islands of eastern North Carolina.

European Contact: Regional History Prior to 1700

Native Americans inhabiting sixteenth century North Carolina could not possibly have foreseen the changes coming to their ways of life as a result of European exploration and colonial expansion. During the two centuries that followed, attempts at cultural coexistence produced increased conflict in dramatic and often appalling ways. Furthermore, disease transported unknowingly by early Europeans explorers, and later by settlers and their African captives, wrought havoc among native populations possessing

³⁸ Thomas Ross, *American Indians in North America* (Southern Pines, NC: Karo Hollow Press, 1999), 13.

³⁹ Henry Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 36.

⁴⁰ Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1987), 19.

no immunity. The consequences would decimate Native American communities and result in the eventual destruction of long-standing traditional settlements, not only in eastern North Carolina, but also throughout the Americas. It was not until near the turn of the twentieth century that native populations eventually began to strengthen again, but by this time, the devastating transformations made to their traditional identities were irrevocable.

Decades of limited interaction would pass before these ruinous changes ultimately came to bear as European exploration in the mid-Atlantic region slowly gathered momentum. In 1524, Italian navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano set sail from Dieppe, France on the royal French ship *La Dauphine* in search of a western trade route to the Far East and is thought to be the first known European to reach the Outer Banks of present day North Carolina.⁴¹ The explorer's regional examination was relatively brief, however, as a navigable passage leading beyond the narrow isthmus of the barrier islands was never discovered and the expedition continued northwards up the Atlantic coast. A 1529 map generated by Verrazzano's brother, Girilamo, indicates that the expanse of Pamlico Sound, as seen over the dunes of Ocracoke Island, was originally believed to be the vast Pacific Ocean. This misleading information was subsequently disseminated throughout Europe, and provided increased momentum for additional voyages of exploration to the western Atlantic, ostensibly for the expansion of both commercial markets and national empire. Shortly thereafter in 1526, Spanish officials sent vessels north from their Caribbean colonies to investigate the commercial potential of the coastal Carolinas,

⁴¹ Elizabeth A. Fern and Peter H. Wood, *Natives and Newcomers: The Way We Lived in North Carolina before 1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 11-12.

landing along the coast near Cape Fear.⁴² By the mid-1500s, Spain set aside the notion of colonizing coastal mid-Atlantic territories, apparently seeing only limited value, and concentrated more intently on their possessions in the West Indies.

With French interests focused on more northerly climes, Sir Walter Raleigh, in response to a six-year patent granted by England's Queen Elizabeth I, dispatched an expedition consisting of two English barks, captained by Masters Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlow.⁴³ The patent, dated March 25, 1584, granted permission for Raleigh to

...discover, search, find out, and view such remote, heathen and barbarous lands, countries, and territories, not actually possessed of any Christian prince, nor inhabited by Christian people, as to him, his heires and assignes, and to every or any of them shall seeme good...⁴⁴

By July, Raleigh's two sailing vessels and their crews had crossed the Atlantic, chanced upon a passageway leading beyond the Outer Bank islands, and eventually arrived upon what later would become known as Roanoke Island, in the northern reaches of Pamlico Sound. Initial contact between the English and Native Americans occurred on the third day after the ship's arrival. Relations were initially inquisitive and courteous, as gifts were exchanged between both parties, and soon thereafter, according to Captain Barlowe's report to Walter Raleigh, a relationship of exchange began to develop among the new arrivals and the local natives.

A day or two after this we fell to trading with them, exchanging some things that we had for chamois, buff and deer skins... We exchanged our tin dish for twenty skins, worth twenty crowns or twenty nobles, and a copper kettle for fifty skins,

⁴² Watson, Latham, and Samford, 1.

⁴³ Arthur Barlow, "The First Voyage to the Coast of America, 1584: Report of Arthur Barlow to Sir Walter Raleigh," in *Explorations, Descriptions, and Attempted Settlements of Carolina, 1584-1590*, rev.ed., ed. David L. Corbitt (Raleigh, NC: State Department of Archives and History, 1953), 13-26.

⁴⁴ Luther S. Livingston, "Introductory Note," in *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, reprint, Thomas Harriot (Murfreesboro, NC: Johnson Publishing Company, 1969), ix.

worth fifty crowns. They offered us good exchange for our hatchets and axes and for knives, and would have given anything for swords, but we would not depart with any.⁴⁵

Encouraged by several weeks of exploration, discovery, and exchange, the expedition returned to England, where its exploits immediately inspired preparations for the placement of a permanent settlement on the shores of newly christened "Virginia," so named in honor of England's vestal queen.

In 1585, an additional group of English ships led by Sir Richard Grenville, and including Oxford mathematician and surveyor Thomas Harriot and naturalist artist John White, voyaged across the Atlantic and established a small settlement and military outpost upon Roanoke Island (Figure 6).⁴⁶ After only two months, Grenville left for England, leaving just a small band of 108 men to maintain the newly settled position under the leadership of Governor Ralph Lane. For nearly a year under less than ideal circumstances, the settlement endured before finally being re-supplied by Sir Francis Drake's fleet of twenty-three ships, returning from a successful raiding campaign against Spanish colonies in the south.

The year spent along the eastern coast of America was a mixed accomplishment at best. The small settlement did in fact manage to survive, however no apparent commercial or military developments were evident, and it also appeared that the colonists had made numerous enemies among their native neighbors. Following an intense coastal storm that many believed to be divinely inspired, Drake, Lane, and the other Roanoke settlers decided to abandon their position and return to England. Sir Grenville returned to

⁴⁵ Barlow, 17.

⁴⁶ Harriot, 1-5; Fern and Wood, 17-18.

Roanoke Island shortly thereafter, but instead of refortifying the settlement, left only a moderate detachment of fifteen soldiers (all of whom eventually went missing), and sailed south to the Caribbean in pursuit of merchant vessels associated with the much more lucrative Spanish colonial trade.

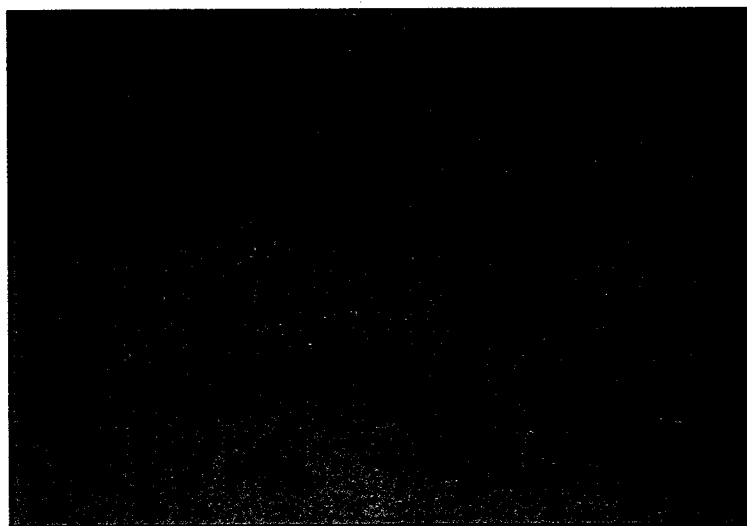


Figure 6: Theodore de Bry engraving of the English arriving in Virginia in 1585 (map is oriented to the west).⁴⁷

In early 1587, another English mission set sail for the eastern shores of America, this time under the leadership of former Roanoke illustrator John White.⁴⁸ Additionally, the expedition manifest included women and children for the first time, and by mid-summer, the first English colonist was born in the Americas to Eleanor and Ananias Dare, daughter and son-in-law of expedition leader Governor White. Just weeks after the

⁴⁷ Faupel, 23-24.

⁴⁸ John White, "The Fourth Voyage to Virginia, 1587" in *Explorations, Descriptions, and Attempted Settlements of Carolina, 1584-1590*, rev.ed., ed. David L. Corbitt (Raleigh, NC: State Department of Archives and History, 1953), 104-119. Two additional informative sources on the Roanoke Voyages are David B. Quinn's *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606* published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1985, and *Searching for the Roanoke Colonies: An Interdisciplinary Collection* edited by Charles R. Ewing and E. Thomson Shields, Jr., published in 2003 by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

birth of granddaughter Virginia Dare, White returned to England to procure essential supplies, not realizing that it would be three years before his eventual return. In 1590, upon once again reaching the Roanoke settlement, the English explorer discovered it to be left abandoned. The only suggestion as to the possible whereabouts of the colony was the message "Croatoan" carved into a tree, which was believed to either indicate a local Indian village or perhaps a southern departure to either present-day Hatteras or Ocracoke Islands.⁴⁹ Some historians believe that a portion of the group moved north to a point near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. An alternative theory put forth by Dr. James Horn, Director of the John D. Rockefeller Library at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, suggests that the colonists ventured inland up the Roanoke and Chowan Rivers under the protection of friendly Chowanoc Indians.⁵⁰ All efforts to locate the missing colonists ultimately met with failure, and their loss remains a mystery to this day. Decades would pass before English settlers appeared again in the eastern Carolinas, this time emerging from settlements in the Chesapeake Bay region of northern Virginia.

The English attempt at colonizing Roanoke Island failed, not for want of natural resources, lack of potential, or overly aggressive native behaviors, but because lead officials, administrators, and ocean-going opportunists held little commercial interest in the eastern banks of present-day North Carolina, even though explorers Arthur Barlowe,

⁴⁹ John White, "The Fifth Voyage to Virginia, Search for the Lost Colony, 1590" in *Explorations, Descriptions, and Attempted Settlements of Carolina, 1584-1590*, rev.ed., ed. David L. Corbitt (Raleigh, NC: State Department of Archives and History, 1953), 121-138. In 1590, Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands were one long landmass. The most recent Hatteras Inlet formed in 1846 (see page 3).

⁵⁰ James Horn, *A Land as God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 145.

Thomas Harriot, and others, offered sufficient evidence regarding its latent value.⁵¹ Certainly, England's war with Spain redirected a quantity of essential resources needed for overseas expeditions and was a significant distraction until the late 1580s, but more alluring to many within the English hierarchy was the wealth being generated through Spanish colonial interests in the West Indies and elsewhere, areas that were supported by an established maritime infrastructure for decades. An overextension of commercial maritime resources, the complexities of regional coastal geography (with a preference for the Chesapeake Bay region), and the limited potential for generating immediate financial returns, collectively doomed the Roanoke settlement virtually from its inception.

Later in 1629, following the establishment of a successful English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia, King Charles I granted former Member of Parliament, Sir Robert Heath lands in the southern colony which included the regions of present-day North and South Carolina.⁵² Although the large land area was considered to be independent from Virginian colonial holdings, the newly entitled "Carolana" (a Latin variation of Charles) became the subject of increasing curiosity among colonists from that region. As expeditions into the low-lying Carolana wilderness became more frequent, and tracts of available lands were publicized back in England, it was only a matter of time before permanent colonial settlements began to appear. By the 1660s, and at times under threat from discontented Native Americans unwilling to bargain away their lands, fur traders, tobacco planters, and captive slaves moved south beyond the Great Dismal Swamp and

⁵¹ Haag, 47; Barlow, 21; Harriot, 14-33.

⁵² Watson, Latham, and Samford, 4.

established settlements along the Roanoke and Chowan Rivers and the borders of Albemarle Sound.

In 1663, as a consequence of Robert Heath's unwillingness to settle in Carolana permanently, the land was re-granted as "Carolina" to eight newly appointed Lords Proprietors, this time by King Charles II as compensation for their loyalty to the reclaimed monarchy.⁵³ Population in the region now exceeded five hundred settlers, and in 1665, as its numbers and significance continued to rise, the Proprietors designated Carolina's entire northeastern region as Albemarle County. Land intermittently cultivated by generations of Native Americans, and surrounded by virgin timber forests and navigable waterways, was a prime objective for any settler willing to accept the risks inherent with such an undertaking.

In the final decades of the seventeenth century, settlers continued moving southwards to establish homesteads in Albemarle County. Over time, the progression widened outside of the Albemarle Sound region and began to extend into the Pamlico and Neuse River basins. Shrewd colonial speculators, proprietors, and wealthy planters commenced the acquisition of sizeable land grants or purchased tracts of property at exceedingly nominal prices in the expectation of a growing population and improved commercial activity. Their foresight would eventually pay considerable dividends.

A century earlier, there was barely a trickle of colonists crossing the Atlantic, but with increasing numbers came a momentum capable of overriding most inherent obstacles. The stride was relatively slow at the start, as fields were cleared, homes

⁵³ Ibid.

constructed, and small communities erected on the edge of local waterways. Eventually, everything positioned in the path of this colonial movement would be absorbed, displaced, or destroyed. With no other transportation infrastructure available, primitive maritime technologies set the pace of expansion, and as they evolved so would the communities of Carolina.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGING THE CORRIDOR

Complexities of Settlement in Carolina's Albemarle County

In June 1665, following some legal wrangling over the ultimate boundary between Carolina and Virginia, the Lords Proprietors obtained definitive legal authority concerning settlement in Carolina's northern Albemarle County.¹ The Charter of the Lords Proprietors reads in part:

Therefore, We, for us, our heirs and Successors, Do give and Grant, by these presents, Power, license, and liberty unto all the liege people of us, our heirs and Successors, in the kingdom of England or elsewhere within any other our Dominions, Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, Excepting those who shall be especially forbidden, to transport themselves and Families unto the said Province, with convenient Shipping and fitting Provisions, and there to settle themselves, dwell, and inhabit.²

Although the process of establishing an official proprietary government was already well underway, most incoming European settlers found only a hazardous and inhospitable wilderness of unknown potential. Overland travel through the region's dense mires and thick woodlands proved grueling even under the best conditions. Consequently, hunters, fur traders, and enterprising pioneers often utilized small, shallow draft vessels suitable for the coastal environment to circumvent these natural obstacles. Survival demanded that they adapt well to their surroundings and carve out livelihoods much as they carved out their individual homesteads: through hard work, frugality, and prioritizing those methods of subsistence most essential and expedient.

¹ Mattie E. Parker, ed., *North Carolina Charters and Constitutions, 1578-1698* (Raleigh, NC: Carolina Tercentenary Commission, 1963), 75, 90.

² *Ibid.*, 80.

There is little doubt that the landscape contained countless hardships, however, it also held abundant natural resources as well. In the late seventeenth century, much of the coastal plain brimmed with soil prime for agriculture and large swathes of hickory, juniper, beech, oak, cypress, and long-leaf pine forests. Nearby waterways offered ample fishing stocks, but more importantly, allowed stable and straightforward access to the renewable resources located on shore. With proper management, these environmental assets could foster expansion, nourish growing communities, and possibly enable regional prosperity. It was prudent, therefore, that upon their arrival, most incoming settlers sought to establish strategic waterfront positions in an effort to increase their probability of success. The Carolina economy was in its infancy and thereby primarily dependent upon the pioneering ingenuity and keen maritime resourcefulness of its newly placed inhabitants.

Although migration and settlement along the interior shores of Albemarle County proved difficult tasks for early European colonists, the inland route was often times far superior to the coastal alternative. Movement over interior rivers and sounds was usually more reliable than along the banks of the Atlantic. Most of northeastern Carolina's shoreline consisted of desolate barrier islands, precariously shallow inlets, and irregular stretches of remote dunes. With no worthwhile overland roads from north to south and an abundance of treacherous, shifting shoals offshore, shipwrecks along the coast became commonplace. These impediments, combined with the region's lack of an adequate deep-water ocean port, forced many incoming settlers to avoid the coast altogether and migrate over inland water routes instead. The absence of a coastal seaport also produced

an ever-widening shortage of slave labor, forcing late seventeenth and early eighteenth century slaveholders to import captive laborers of lesser physical ability and at significantly higher costs.³ This fact increased the disparity of plantation output when weighed against the production of other southern colonies. The totality of these major economic, geographic, and logistical obstacles hindered transportation, settlement, and commerce in the northern region of Carolina for several generations.

While incoming settlers and captive slaves struggled to tame the Albemarle wilderness, the Lords Proprietors' primary concern was for the commercial development of Charles Town, South Carolina.⁴ Time was of the essence, as their proprietary government came under commercial and political pressures from corresponding British colonies as well as the Crown itself. The lack of official influence for the more northerly inland Carolina port communities, in combination with insignificant amounts of operational capital, caused the maritime infrastructure in Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds to develop exceedingly slow. As a result, area planters found it difficult to ship recently cultivated resources, such as corn and grain, to other English ports, as was so ordered by England's Navigation Acts.⁵ In 1660, the Restoration Parliament in London amended the Navigation Acts of 1649 and 1651 to require that all colonial trade be conducted aboard English owned vessels and between English controlled ports. No "foreign" trade of any kind was permissible in the colonies. Thus, maritime commerce in colonial Carolina was not only geographically and financially restricted, but legally and politically suppressed

³ William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 2 - 1713 to 1728 (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1993), xii. (Henceforth: Saunders, ed., *CRNC*)

⁴ *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

⁵ Oliver M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 7-8.

as well. Settlers were forced to find inventive measures to sustain and expand their livelihoods. Imaginative uses of shallow draft marine technologies, creative port strategies, illegal smuggling, and piracy all played significant roles. Without the reinforcing advantages of open distribution or the compound revenues usually associated with “sanctioned” maritime commerce – and no solid capital base to fall back upon – even fundamental methods of subsistence came up well short of expectations.

As an example, a severe lack of gristmills (key to preserving grain during the winter months) beleaguered North Carolina in the early eighteenth century and required that Indian corn and English wheat (plentiful in colonial Albemarle County) be exported over water routes to northern mills, processed, and later returned for consumption as flour and meal.⁶ The quality of this circulated yield was often dreadfully poor, albeit better and more plentiful than the substance produced locally through the use of hand mills and mortars. This complex transportation cycle of grain handling was inherently inefficient and extremely expensive, generating little local income or mercantile progression. Indeed, the only merchants who profited from the practice were shipping captains and millers from colonial New England, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.⁷

During this period, scores of Virginians already felt indifferent toward the progress of North Carolina’s colonists due to the lingering border dispute between the two opposing sides, so much so, that the Virginia Acts of Assembly (1679 through 1729) lawfully prohibited the shipment of cultivated North Carolina tobacco products through

⁶ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 2: xii-xiii.

⁷ *Ibid.*

the colony in an attempt to stifle its competition.⁸ The endeavor proved most effective. With no adequate port facilities between Chesapeake Bay and Charles Town, merchants in North Carolina were almost entirely excluded from participating in outside tobacco markets.⁹

The consequences of these plentiful and troublesome impediments were equivalent to decade's long commercial stagnation, sluggish population growth, and limited advances in regional development. All the same, Carolina settlers continued to exploit the most advantageous features of their landscape with steadfast determination in an effort to increase maritime market shares and thusly improve their regional economic condition.

Colonial Bath Town: The First Tar-Pamlico River Terminal

Early maritime commerce in colonial North Carolina was originally structured around a small Albemarle County waterfront settlement adjacent to the mouth of the Chowan River at present-day Edenton. Incoming residents used this community to facilitate adaptive use of agricultural properties and establish commercial connections along the shores of Albemarle Sound. The General Assembly, in addition to other governmental business, oversaw the particulars of local land-use and maritime legislation as outlined in several concessions and agreements by the Lords Proprietors:

As also, within any part of the said count[y] to create and appoint such and so many ports, harbours, Creeks, and other places for the convenient Lading and Unlading of goods and Merchandise out of ships, boats, and other vessels as they shall see expedient, with such Jurisdictions, privileges, and franchises to such

⁸ Ibid., xiv.

Ports, etc., belonging as they shall judge most Conducing to the General good of the said plantation or count[y].¹⁰

Over time, as the number of settlers migrating into the immediate area grew and quality waterfront property became increasingly scarce, colonists pushed the margins of settlement further to the south and west. As early as 1676, the Lords Proprietors broadened newly appointed Governor Thomas Eastchurch's authority to include "all such settlements as shall bee made upon the rivers Pamlico and Newse within our province of Carolina."¹¹

In 1696, in an endeavor to further regionalize local jurisdiction and support colonists moving into unsettled areas, government officials selected a large segment of southern Albemarle County to be re-designated as the County of Bath, in honor of Lord Proprietor John Granville, Earl of Bath.¹² Governor Thomas Harvey issued the first land grant to be recorded in the newly sanctioned county to Captain Thomas Blount in 1697.¹³ Under the provisions of the grant, Blount was required to clear a portion of the 226 acre tract – located on the northern shore of the Pamlico River near present-day Goose Creek State Park – and formally settle upon it within two years or forfeit ownership. Blount fulfilled the terms of the grant contract in May of 1701.

A subsequent marriage of Thomas Blount's son to Ann Reading, combined with several advantageous land purchases over the next several decades increased the Blount

¹⁰ Parker, 116.

¹¹ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 1, 233.

¹² Alan D. Watson, Eva C. Latham, and Patricia Samford, *Bath: The First Town in North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2005), 5.

¹³ Alice B. Keith, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers*, Vol. 1, 1764-1789 (Raleigh, NC: State Department of Archives and History, 1952), xiii; C. Wingate Reed, *Beaufort County: Two Centuries of its History* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1962), 22.

estate considerably further. Members of the Blount family served successfully in business, education, and politics, and continued to prosper in the Tar-Pamlico region and elsewhere. William Blount, son of Jacob and Barbara Blount, was arguably the most prominent figure in the family line. He became a trustee of the University of North Carolina and Pitt Academy, served in the North Carolina General Assembly, represented the state in Congress, and was a member of the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787.¹⁴ Over the years, the Blount family controlled interests in merchandising, shipping, agriculture, slavery, timber, land speculation, and government. They were considered by many residents as a quality example for others to follow. Their family legacy remains strong throughout eastern North Carolina, most especially in and around the community of Washington.

As Bath County's population increased, officials subdivided it into the individual precincts of Pamtecough, Wickham, and Archdale.¹⁵ In 1712, officials renamed these precincts Beaufort, Hyde, and Craven to honor Henry [Somerset], Duke of Beaufort, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, and William Craven, Earl of Craven.¹⁶ This newly organized geographic arrangement along the Pamlico River later divided Chowan and Albemarle Counties to the north and Clarendon County to the south, and required a

¹⁴ Keith, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers*, Vol. 1, 1764-1789, xviii-xx.

¹⁵ John Lawson, "1709 Map of the Carolinas," in *History of North Carolina*, (Charlotte, NC: Observer Printing House, 1903). This map appears as an inset in Lawson's reprinted version of "The History of Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of that Country: Together with the Present State Thereof, and a Journal of a Thousand Miles, Travel'd thro' Several Nations of Indians, Giving a Particular Account of their Customs, Manners, etc." originally published in 1714. Lawson became the Surveyor General of North Carolina in 1700 and was succeeded by Edward Moseley in 1710.

¹⁶ Reed, v, 10; Watson, Latham, and Samford, 5-6.

centralized waterfront community to support the efforts of incoming settlers as the difficulties of backwoods colonial settlement persisted.

Near the turn of the eighteenth century, Governor Thomas Cary granted certain lands in Bath County previously belonging to proprietary governor Seth Sothel to local planter David Perkins.¹⁷ In 1705, Perkins sold a sixty-acre parcel to John Lawson (Surveyor General of North Carolina), Joel Martin, and Simon Alderson for the creation of a planned settlement on the northern shore of the Pamlico River. The founders situated the new community of Bath Town, the centerpiece of lately formed Pampticough Precinct, upon a raised spit of land flanked between Old Town and Adams Creeks (modern day Bath and Back Creeks).¹⁸ Archaeological and cartographic evidence indicates that the Indian villages of Cotan (Secotan) and Pampticough previously occupied the site, implying that Native Americans still held the land in considerable regard (Figure 7).¹⁹ Over the years, the spread of lethal diseases, such as smallpox, caused a dramatic reduction in the quantity of local native villages, forcing survivors to scatter elsewhere throughout the countryside.

With the sale of thirteen surveyed lots in 1706, Bath Town's new mission was to assist incoming settlers and serve as a focal point of colonial government, transportation, and trade. In addition to the Lords Proprietors and Bath Town's four original founders, other notable area landowners and planters included William Barrow, William Brice,

¹⁷ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 14; Reed, 19. Sothel was charged with numerous offenses, including illegal confiscation of property. He was ultimately tried, convicted, expelled from the colony for one year, and banned from holding any further office in the Carolinas.

¹⁸ Herbert Paschal, "In the Beginning" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 1.

¹⁹ W. John Faupel, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia: A Study of the de Bry Engravings* (West Sussex, England: Antique Atlas Publications, 1989), 21-22; Reed, 8-9.

John Burras, Governor Thomas Cary, Richard Collins, Robert Daniel, Nicholas Draw, David Dupree, Christopher Gale, Maurice Luellyn, Levi Truewhite, and Collingwood Ward.²⁰ Several of these leading citizens took part in the early planning of a county courthouse, church (with an associated library), stables, and a horse-powered gristmill.²¹ The names Perkins, Barrow, and Martin remained prominently listed near Bath Town on Edward Moseley's 1733 map of North Carolina (Figure 8).²²

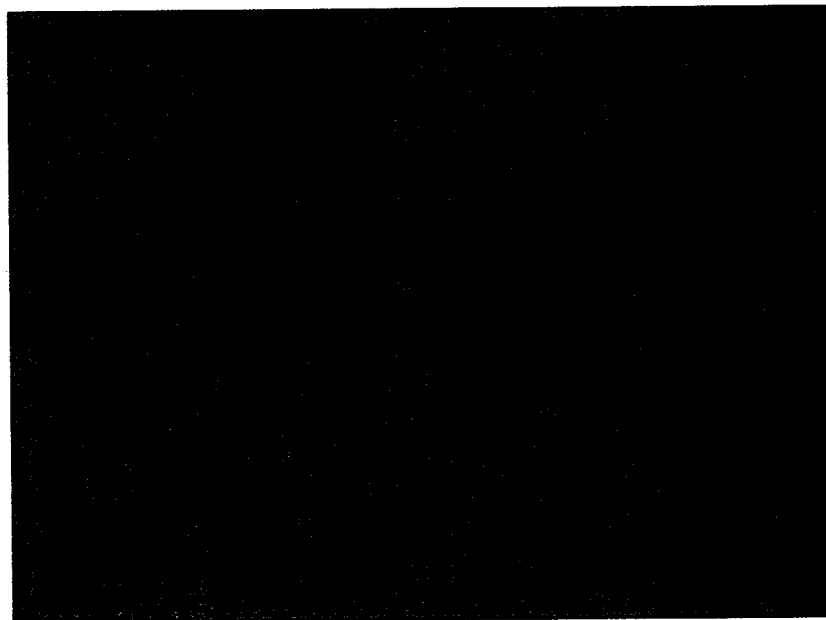


Figure 7: John White and Theodor De Bry's 1590 Map of Virginia, with inset box showing the Native village of Cotan (amended by author). Map is oriented to the west.²³

As the Pamlico region gradually attracted more permanent settlers, the General Assembly of North Carolina formally incorporated Bath Town in March of 1705.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid.; Watson, Latham, and Samford, 7. Following the American Revolution, Bath was the first officially recognized community in the state of North Carolina.

²¹ John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, rep. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), xxii-xxiv. The village of Cotan is also shown on a 1606 map by cartographer Gerhard Mercator (published in Amsterdam by Jodocus Hondius).

²² Edward Moseley, "Moseley Map, 1733" (Greenville, NC: Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University).

²³ Faupel, 21-22.

Although local transportation methods lacked both structure and organization, Bath Town officials utilized their limited legal authority to improve routes of travel over both land and water. In order to bolster accessibility, they progressively integrated narrow winding footpaths into a larger system of crude roads connected by water corridors via a system of rudimentary ferries and landings, with a regional priority to establish a north/south route from Edenton to New Bern.²⁵ The latter became a slightly improved combination of blazed Indian paths and the original Pamlico Road, running from Bull's Ferry on Albemarle Sound (present-day Mackeys), west to Welch's Creek, south to Bath (in the direction of modern-day NC Route 3), across the Pamlico River, and then on to ferries near New Bern. This route became a segment of the much larger postal road which ultimately extended from Portland, Maine to Savannah, Georgia. Historian Hebert Paschal described an eighteenth century sampling of the local thoroughfare in *A History of Colonial Bath*.

Along this road flowed a never ceasing stream of settlers, farmers on the way to market, gamblers, strolling players, tinkers, peddlers, Indians, colonial officials, ministers, and the whole ever-changing panorama of eighteenth-century America. Some of these travelers have left accounts of their journey along the Bath portion of this high road and whether it was the minister who traveled this route in 1739, the French secret agent in 1765, the colonial patriot in 1773, or the farmer and agricultural reformer in 1777, all are agreed that the roads were terrible and above all lonely, the accommodations for travelers poor, and the wide ferries a necessary but great inconvenience.²⁶

With so few passable roads, waterways remained the most efficient manner of transportation. Nevertheless, officials had yet to designate any official ports of entry

²⁴ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 9, 12.

²⁵ Herbert R. Paschal, *A History of Colonial Bath* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Co., 1955), 46.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

south of Albemarle Sound, despite interest from landowners and merchants to intensify commerce along North Carolina's coastal waterways. While it was in the government's best interest to establish official ports in order to regulate trade and gather duties, the limited amount of commercial maritime traffic passing through the Pamlico region did not yet warrant such an effort. Edenton was still the primary port in North Carolina; however, by 1731, rising sedimentation in Roanoke Inlet began to make access to and from the Atlantic Ocean increasingly more difficult for ships calling there.²⁷ Many vessels began to use the more southerly Ocracoke Inlet, thereby increasing maritime traffic along Pamlico Sound and its surrounding waterways. This condition ultimately enabled an increase in the lower colony's population despite continued isolation and wide-ranging obstacles.

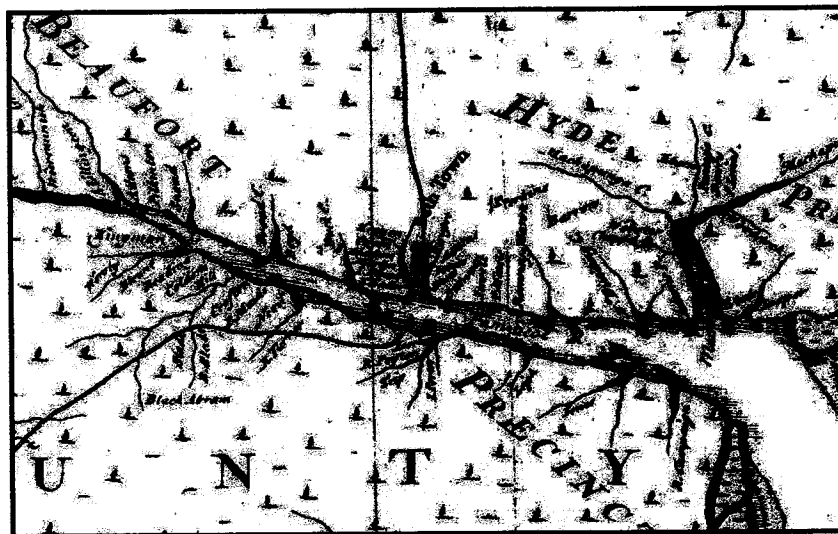


Figure 8: Detail of Edward Moseley's 1733 Map of North Carolina.²⁸

²⁷ Catherine S. Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Society, Daughters of the Revolution, 1914) 140-141.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Eighteenth century physician, politician, and historian Dr. Hugh Williamson (1735-1819), stated that, "the whole number of taxable inhabitants in the year 1717 did not exceed two thousand" (taxable inhabitants included white males above the age of sixteen and black persons twelve and older).²⁹ A taxable count of two thousand people meant approximately nine thousand colonial inhabitants in total, including slaves.³⁰ Clusters of French Huguenots seeking religious tolerance, Rhine Germans from Pennsylvania, English, Welsh, Scots-Irish families from the Virginia colony, and African slaves all found themselves living on the plains of the lower Tar-Pamlico watershed. The rise in overall North Carolina population notwithstanding, Bath Town struggled for continued existence in the face of political disorder, religious upheaval, extended drought, disease, and the chaos of the Tuscarora Indian War.³¹

In the early 1700s, a loose confederation of Tuscarora communities, linked largely by an Iroquoian dialect, occupied several areas within eastern North Carolina. Historians estimate their total number at greater than 8,000 inhabitants divided among politically autonomous settlements along the Roanoke and Tar Rivers, and Contentnea Creek (a major tributary of the Neuse River, just south of the Tar).³² Trading relationships between colonists and Native Americans, begun decades earlier, continued throughout the region, but as more European settlers arrived, this relationship began to erode. North Carolina explorer John Lawson, appearing to possess a profound respect for

²⁹ Hugh Williamson, *The History of North Carolina*, Vol. 1 (1812), North Carolina History and Fiction Digital Library, 2003, http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/historyfiction/document/win/207_image.html.

³⁰ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 2: xvii.

³¹ Cary's Rebellion (1708-1711) was a violent political dispute between North Carolina Quakers and Anglicans for control of the colonial government. The conflict was centered in and around Bath Town.

³² Thomas C. Parramore, "The Tuscarora Ascendancy." *The North Carolina Historical Review* LIX, no. 4 (1982): 313.

Native American cultures, recognized the rising level of discrimination and conflict in a brief passage from his impressive expedition report published in 1709.

We reckon them Slaves in Comparison to us, and Intruders, as oft as they enter our houses, or hunt near our Dwellings. But if we will admit Reason to be our Guide, she will inform us, that these *Indians* are the freest People in the world, and so far from being Intruders upon us, that we have abandon'd our own Native Soil, so to drive them out, and possess theirs.³³

Evidently more sensitive to their plight than the natives fully realized, the Tuscarora forcibly abducted and held Lawson in 1711, along with Palatine leader and New Bern founder, Baron Christopher von Graffenried. Von Graffenried fared far better than his fellow captive by concealing his identity and surviving the confinement, while the natives reportedly tortured Lawson with firebrands, ultimately causing his death.³⁴ A letter dated 2 November 1711, from North Carolina's first Chief Justice, Major Christopher Gale, to the Honorable Robert Gibs and the Council of the General Assembly, described the event.

But the fate of Mr. Lawson (if our Indian information be true) was much more tragical, for we are informed that they stuck him full of fine small splinters of torchwood like hogs' bristles, and so set them gradually on fire. This, I doubt not, had been my fate if Providence had not prevented; but I hope God Almighty has designed me for an instrument in the revenging such innocent Christian blood.³⁵

Tensions between settlers and Native Americans continued to escalate, and on September 22, 1711 the Tuscarora Indian War began in earnest.³⁶ Tuscaroras from the "Lower Towns" (Neuse River settlements) joined warriors from nearby smaller non-

³³ Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, 243.

³⁴ Thomas C. Parramore, "With Tuscarora Jack on the Back path to Bath." *The North Carolina Historical Review* LXIV, no. 2 (1987): 115. Von Graffenried, originally from Bern, Switzerland, led a group of Swiss and German settlers into the region of present-day New Bern, NC.

³⁵ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 1: 825-827.

³⁶ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 19.

Tuscarora villages and made a series of attacks on white settlements along the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers. The attacks, planned and implemented in secrecy, came in response to anxiety over Indian slavery, unfair trading practices, increasing European encroachment, and other affronts committed by area settlers.³⁷ The combined Indian force of several hundred warriors, under the direction of Chief Hancock (a given Christian name), killed over 130 colonists in Bath County (some estimates place the number considerably higher). Additionally, the warring bands burned crops, destroyed homes and vessels, slew livestock, and laid waste to colonial winter provisions.

“Upper Town” Tuscaroras, under Chief Tom Blount, remained largely neutral during the bloody uprising.³⁸ They neither actively sided with Chief Hancock nor with the white settlers, however, since many of them maintained either trading relationships or daily interactions with colonists they tended to be more supportive of the colonial cause. Chief Blount’s settlements concentrated around the village of Ucohnerunt, also known as “King Blount’s Town,” which most researchers believe was located on the southwestern shore of the Tar River approximately five miles northwest of present day Greenville.³⁹ It is important to consider the possibility of both Tuscarora bands uniting against area colonists during this early state of European settlement. If this were the case, it remains doubtful whether they would have ultimately survived the joint onslaught. Consequently, the future of colonial North Carolina depended upon a delicate non-allegiance among

³⁷ Parramore, “With Tuscarora Jack on the Back path to Bath,” 120.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

³⁹ Henry T. King, *Sketches of Pitt County: A Brief History of the County, 1704-1910*, rep. (Greenville, NC: Era Press, 1976), 21; Wade G. Dudley, “Phase I Survey: Maritime Sites along the Tar River, 1700-1915” (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Manuscript, 1996), 19; Moseley, “Moseley Map, 1733;” Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, 242. Lawson called the village “Oonossoora.”

tribal kinsmen and Chief Blounts' tentative loyalty (due largely to trade) to the Virginia and North Carolina colonists.

Bath Town itself was not a direct target of the Indian attacks, as most of the violence took place a bit further inland to the south and west on the periphery of colonial expansion. The small hamlet quickly came under duress, however, as wounded settlers and panicked refugees took shelter in hastily defended positions nearby. In response to the attacks, Governor Edward Hyde attempted a disorganized effort to elicit aid from within North Carolina and elsewhere throughout the South. On the brink of colonial defeat, reinforcements from South Carolina allied themselves with Indian warriors from the Yamasee and Catawba tribes and marched from Charles Town to North Carolina under the leadership of Colonel John "Tuscarora Jack" Barnwell (the nickname came following the assault and plunder of the Indian village Torhunta in January 1712).⁴⁰

In addition to the opposing land force, South Carolina dispatched a relief vessel loaded with munitions and supplies – arranged as a result of Major Gale's impassioned testimony – with the intention of eventually linking up with Barnwell along an interior shore of the Neuse River. The materials onboard were meant not only to re-supply the military operation, but also to aid in the relief of communities beset by the unfolding hostilities, with Bath Town foremost on the list. Unfortunately, the support sloop never passed clear of the barrier islands and into Pamlico Sound. A French warship seized the vessel underway as part of the continuing Queen Anne's War between England, France,

⁴⁰ Parramore, "With Tuscarora Jack on the Back path to Bath," 124; Watson, Latham, and Samford, 20.

and Spain.⁴¹ The despondent refugees in Bath Town spent the winter months isolated from outside communication and assistance until February 9, 1712, when Barnwell's company finally arrived in canoes on the Tar-Pamlico River.

The dire conflict continued as the winter of 1712 passed into the warmer months of spring and summer. In an attempt to hasten potential victory, Governor Hyde ordered several of the few remaining merchant vessels operating in North Carolina's inland waters pressed into military service. The measures were thought necessary in order to transfer provisions to where they were most needed; however, little documentation remains concerning the measure's ultimate effectiveness. On July 31, the governing Council recorded:

It is so ordered by this Board that a Shallop belonging to Richard Silvester of Virginia whereof Richard Jasper is at present master be forthwith Imprest into ye Country's Service and ... doe appraise the same with all her takle furniture and apperall and make return thereof to this board.⁴²

A few days later, the Board ordered:

Captain William Rawlason be Employ'd in ye Country's service as master of ye Sloop *Returne* belonging to the Honorable Barron De Graffenried and now lyeing aground in Nuse River and that he forthwith doe take ye Said Sloop into his charge and Endeavour to get her off and put her in order fitt for ye Country's Services...⁴³

The official order to re-float von Graffenried's grounded sloop is emblematic of both the conflict's situational anxieties and the colony's state of limited maritime resources.

The war was ultimately decided in March of the following year after two unsuccessful treaty attempts; when yet another Colonial-Indian force, led by Colonel

⁴¹ Parramore, "With Tuscarora Jack on the Back path to Bath," 118. Queen Ann's War continued from 1702-1713.

⁴² Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 2: 866.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 867.

James Moore, killed, wounded, or captured nearly one thousand natives following a siege at Fort Nohoroco near Contentnea Creek.⁴⁴ Although minor clashes between natives and colonists continued for years following the battle, the defeat of the Tuscarora was a major blow to Native American independence and dominance in the region. Many of the surviving Tuscaroras fled well north to the relative safety of Iroquois lands in New York, eventually integrating into the tribes of the Iroquois Nation.⁴⁵ Officials relocated the remaining Tuscarora natives (those not captured and sold into slavery) onto a Roanoke River reservation in Chowan County's Bertie Precinct. The abduction of Indian slaves by Europeans in North Carolina continued until the mid-eighteenth century after which native populations decreased rapidly, with their numbers replaced by slaves of African decent.⁴⁶ Historians believe that by 1804, almost all lingering members of the Carolina Tuscarora tribe migrated north into the New York highlands. By forcibly removing the largest indigenous people from eastern North Carolina, the greatest barrier to regional European settlement was also likewise removed.

Clearly, the war had the most devastating effects on those Native Americans involved in the hostilities, but great suffering occurred on the colonial side as well. Scores of settlers were killed or wounded, homes were lost, and the commercial momentum that had once been evident was completely overwhelmed by the conflict. The attacks destroyed plantations and halted productivity; local proprietors lost merchandise and livelihoods; the destruction of official records created increased disorder and

⁴⁴ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 21.

⁴⁵ Many descendants of North Carolina Tuscarora still remain on a reservation in Lewiston, NY, northeast of Niagara Falls, NY. The United States Census of 2000 listed a population of 1,138.

⁴⁶ Christopher A. Oakley, "The Indian Slave Trade in Coastal North Carolina and Virginia" (Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina-Wilmington, 1996), 80-88.

confusion as public debt skyrocketed, leading to devalued currency and associated economic obstacles. The colony recovered slowly, but with the victory, little doubt remained over whether or not it would ultimately survive. Commercial maritime traffic on the river, virtually nonexistent during the war, began to improve and minister to the community's revitalization.

On August 1, 1716, three years after the defeat of the Tuscarora at Fort Nohoroco, the Lords Proprietors formally designated the town of Bath as an official port of entry. The settlement grew quickly, both commercially and politically, and local population was once again on the rise. The Proprietorship recognized important factors inherent to the region, taking into account Bath Town's predominant location as:

...the most proper place within the said Province for ships to take in Masts, Pitch, Tar, Turpentine, and other Naval Stores for the use of His Majesties Fleet...
...also considering what great Tracts of Land lye contiguous to the said Bath Town which afford great quantities of Naval Stores.⁴⁷

In the early eighteenth century, the production of naval stores in North Carolina became worthy of England's attention. Prior to 1700, most of England's maritime materials (masts, timber, pine tar, sailcloth, and cordage) originated in the Baltic regions of northern Europe, principally from Sweden.⁴⁸ With the rise of the mercantilist Whig party, the establishment of the Board of Trade, and the passing of the Naval Stores Act of 1705 (enacted to support England's self-sufficiency in the production of naval stores), the mother country was suddenly keenly interested in America's abundant supply of pine products. With an expansion of international trade and colonialism and a tendency for

⁴⁷ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 2: 236-237.

⁴⁸ Justin Williams, "English Mercantilism and Carolina Naval Stores, 1705-1776." *The Journal of Southern History* 1 (1935): 169-171.

armed conflict, the English demand for naval stores increased considerably, and all at a time when Baltic materials – although still cheaper to produce than those from colonial America – were in short supply.⁴⁹

Dense tracts of longleaf pine trees (*pinus palustris*) could be found throughout the coastal plains of North Carolina, including along the length of the Tar-Pamlico watershed.⁵⁰ Forests and savannahs of this particular variety once covered nearly sixty million acres in North America, ranging from present-day Virginia south to Florida, and west through Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and portions of Texas. The tree's prime byproducts were tar and pitch, and from 1705 through 1713, England imported an average of 7,239 barrels annually from colonial America, albeit mostly from ports in New England.⁵¹ This steady and rising stream came in response to the placement of import bounties on all colonial naval stores, clearly designed to level the playing field with Swedish exporters.

In 1714, with colonial property owners exploiting larger tracts of land by means of slave labor, the average import from America jumped nearly 40 percent to over 11,600 barrels (a quarter of England's total). By 1725, over 81,000 barrels arrived in homeland ports each year from the American colonies, with a portion later re-exported elsewhere in exchange for hard currency. While many records show exports of naval stores from New England ports exceeding that of their southern counterparts, the truth remains that much of the original northern export was first cultivated in the Carolinas (from as early as 1705

⁴⁹ The Nine Years War (1688-1697) and Queen Anne's War (1701-1714).

⁵⁰ Lawrence S. Early, *Looking for the Longleaf: The Fall and Rise of an American Forest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1.

⁵¹ Williams, 173-176, 178.

along the Tar-Pamlico River). The year 1753 saw over 84,000 barrels of naval stores exported from North Carolina alone, and less than fifteen years later in 1768, the amount rose by 35 percent to over 127,000 barrels, nearly three-quarters of all the naval stores exported from North America.⁵² Although slow to develop, Bath Town and other emergent Tar-Pamlico River communities served the naval stores industry well as pivotal points for initial production and distribution. These increases in production and exportation also led to further advances in area population and settlement.

The production of naval stores not only increased maritime commerce on the Tar-Pamlico River (as it would until the late nineteenth century), but it also supported complementary industries. In 1725, there were an estimated 120 merchant vessels tasked with the annual overseas shipment of related materials from the colonies.⁵³ Without this type of commercial traffic, other marine activities, including those related to the Royal Navy, would suffer nearly to the point of near collapse. As the naval stores industry built upon itself, it also supported shipbuilders, sailors, chandlers, coopers, blacksmiths, sailmakers, merchants, landowners, distillers, and the communities in which they lived and worked. The trade became so essential to both England and its colonies that it was not until the American Revolution that the British government ultimately lifted the exchange bounties. Until that time, any suggestion of reducing the tariffs, and thereby limiting the flow of colonial naval stores, drew protests and petitions from both sides of the Atlantic. Parliamentary officials became hard pressed to make even the slightest

⁵² Harry R. Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 88; Kate I. Goodall, "The Burroughs Wreck: A Key to Eighteenth Century Ship Construction Techniques and the Life and Death of the Port of Edenton" (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 2003), 9.

⁵³ Williams, 179.

changes to the popular payment policies. Officials in London reconciled themselves by the argument that since the bounties were being remunerated in support of their own colonial empire, it was money well spent.

In post-Tuscarora War Bath Town, rejuvenation continued to be fueled by husbandry (including the harvest of pine products), slave labor, and the expansion of maritime trading practices. Nevertheless, early colonial legislation banned the construction of outbuildings and private wharves on the community waterfront in an effort to protect the town's aesthetic nature and sense of English sophistication.⁵⁴ In 1723, as maritime traffic continued to rise, authorities retracted the law to allow the assembly of essential harbor-side facilities in support of local commerce. It became unmistakably clear to officials that water-borne trade and transportation on the Pamlico River (and elsewhere) would take precedent in order to achieve continued growth and any hope of future economic vitality. Commercial waterfront development (both public and private) was no longer rejected but encouraged, and soon after, officially mandated in most formally established port communities.⁵⁵

Archaeological evidence obtained in 1977 immediately prior to the construction of a supporting bulkhead on Bath's waterfront confirms that early nineteenth century (and perhaps colonial) structures once existed there.⁵⁶ Archaeologists located the foundation of a large harbor-side outbuilding extending beyond the current shoreline and associated

⁵⁴ Donald R. Lennon, "The Development of Town Government in Colonial North Carolina." In *Of Tar Heel Towns, Shipbuilders, Reconstructionists, and Alliancemen: Papers in North Carolina History*, ed. Joseph F. Steelman et al. (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Publications, 1981), 10-11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ John Broadwater, David K. Hazzard, and Martha McCartney, "Historical Bath Archaeological Final Report" (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 4, 28.

numerous artifacts with maritime industries of the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, evidence from a 1960 excavation on the property of the Palmer-Marsh House (built in Bath in 1751) clearly shows a pre-1750 cellar constructed of ship-borne ballast stones, further associating local settlement practices with maritime commerce.⁵⁷ It is also believed that masons used ballast stones to construct the low rock wall surrounding Bath's St. Thomas Anglican Church, where construction began in 1734. Further archeological analysis revealed the presence of several other nearby sites related to maritime activity. Prehistoric lithics, colonial ceramic sherds, deposits of shoreline brick and ballast stone, crib wharf remains, and evidence of pier-side channel dredging imply a once active working waterfront.⁵⁸ James R. Hoyle's 1807 "Plan of the Town of Bath", originally drafted in 1766, shows five individual wharves between Ferry Point (near the present day Route 92 bridge) and Town Point (less than ½ mile south at present day Bonner Point).⁵⁹ The emergence of a basic maritime infrastructure in colonial Bath proved essential for increased commercial expansion on the Tar-Pamlico River, as both internal and external waterborne trading practices began to drive local economies and empower landowners.

Along with Bath's harbor-side development, shipbuilding also gradually gathered momentum. Remaining colonial records seldom indicate the precise location of an individual vessel's construction, usually only providing a general locality. Even so, the first recorded vessel to be constructed on the Pamlico River was a 46x18 foot sloop (keel

⁵⁷ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 84.

⁵⁸ Andrew T. Pietruszka, "Maps, Manuscripts and Survey: Middle Range Theory and the Bath Submerged Cultural Resource Survey" (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 2005), 100-104, 142-143.

⁵⁹ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 30.

length/beam) contracted by shipwright Thomas Harding for Proprietary Governor Thomas Cary in 1706.⁶⁰ Harding was the first shipbuilder officially recognized in Bath Town, although local craftsman William Powell also operated a shipyard in the area during the same period (Table 1).⁶¹

Table 1: Chronological List of Recorded Colonial Vessels Constructed near Bath, NC, (1725-1770).⁶²

Name	Type	Tons	Year	Comments
<i>Adventure</i>	Priaqua		1725	Joseph Herott, master; John West, owner
<i>Virginity</i>	Schooner	3	1725	John West, master and owner
<i>North Carolina</i>	Ship	140	1727	Also known as the <i>North Carolina Merchant</i> ; square stern
<i>Prosperity</i>	Sloop	8	1728	Square stern
<i>Ann and Sarah</i>	Sloop	40	1730	Built in Bath County
<i>Carolina</i>	Sloop	60	1731	Built for John Rieusett of Dublin; square stern
<i>John and David</i>	Ship	100	1731	Square stern
<i>Ranger</i>	Sloop	15	1731	
<i>Bob and Alice</i>	Ship	50	1734	
<i>Happy Luke</i>	Brigantine		1734	Edward Salter, owner; ultimately sold at Boston
<i>Ann and Sarah</i>	Brig	65	1732	Square stern
<i>Salley</i>	Schooner	15	1745	
<i>Ann</i>	Sloop	25	1747	
<i>Schley</i>	Schooner	15	1751	
<i>William</i>	Schooner	12	1754	William Mace, owner; William Liang, master; 3 men
<i>Friendship</i>		10	1762	William Palmer and Company, owner; William Vines, master; 3 men; thought to be built at a plantation associated with Vines or Palmer
<i>Bath Packet</i>	Brig	80	1763	Robert Newall, owner; George Blin, master
<i>Tryon</i>	Schooner	40	1763	William Palmer & Company, owner; Robert Thurston, master; 10 men; thought to be plantation built
<i>Acorn</i>	Brig	70	1769	Bonner Town-built
<i>Charming Molly</i>	Brig	70	1770	Sylvester Pendleton, master and owner; 6 men

Small coastal and inland vessels were the usual watercraft of choice for North Carolina colonists, and undoubtedly local craftsmen built countless vessels that will never

⁶⁰ William N. Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," in *Of Tar Heel Towns, Shipbuilders, Reconstructionists and Alliancemen: Papers in North Carolina History*, ed. Joseph F. Steelman et al. (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Publications, 1981), 27.

⁶¹ Reed, 172.

⁶² William N. Still and Richard A. Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database" (Manuscript, Private Collection of William N. Still, 2006); Reed, 151.

be located or recorded. Records indicate that North Carolina shipwrights were only responsible for the construction of 38 of the 229 vessels involved in the cross-Atlantic commercial trade between the years 1710 and 1739, as most ocean-going vessels operating between Europe and the Americas were either built overseas or in colonial New England.⁶³ However, interpretations of records to date also indicate that Bath shipwrights were responsible for more than a quarter (ten) of those thirty-eight craft. In fact, current research shows that prior to the American Revolution shipbuilders in Bath built eighteen substantial sailing vessels. The ability of regional shipwrights to construct wooden vessels suitable for both ocean and inland commerce, combined with an abundance of available natural resources, were vital for North Carolina's continued growth and commercial development.

As Port Bath grew, the town progressively became a hub of regional shipping, with its jurisdiction covering the Tar-Pamlico River basin south to include the Neuse River drainage.⁶⁴ With increased traffic, officials earmarked a portion of local maritime tax revenue for improvements to navigational safety and erected channel markers and beacons nearby. In 1739 and again in 1745, Governor Gabriel Johnston's Assembly expanded the initial safety effort with the addition of pilot boats and crews hired to aid mariners as they negotiated the restricted approaches to the harbor.⁶⁵ Soon, Bath's modest port was bustling with maritime activity as more watercraft operated under its authority, albeit mostly smaller craft due to the shallow nature of Bath's surrounding

⁶³ Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," 27.

⁶⁴ Ysobel Dupree Litchfield, "Shipping." In *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Raleigh, NC: Washington - Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 228.

⁶⁵ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 23: 127; Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 4: 784-785.

waters. Ocean-going vessels calling on Bath usually had a draft of no more than six to eight feet with a tonnage of less than fifty.⁶⁶ Inland port communities, such as Edenton, New Bern, and Bath, remained active in the ocean trade during this time, as opposed to the coastal regions of Beaufort and Brunswick where Spanish warships continually harassed merchant shipping during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1743).⁶⁷

Canoes, skiffs, flats, punts, periaugers (stable split-wood dugout vessels propelled by oar or sail), yawls, sloops, shallops, schooners, snows, and small brigs all called at Port Bath during the years of the colonial period, arriving from nearby coastal communities and other more remote destinations. Early eighteenth century customs records from Port Bath are virtually nonexistent, but those from the mid-century show an average of 27 vessels per year paying port duties in Bath Town, with an estimated annual tonnage of more than 1,100.⁶⁸ Records also indicate that some of the outlying ports included Annapolis, Baltimore, Boston, Charles Town, New York, Norfolk, and Philadelphia on the North American continent, Antigua, Grenada, Montserrat, Kingston, St. Croix, St. Thomas, and Trinidad in the Caribbean, and Bermuda, Bordeaux, Bristol, Dublin, Glasgow, Liverpool, and London overseas.⁶⁹ Cargoes included captive slaves, naval stores, corn, deerskin, tobacco, salt, rice, molasses, fur, indigo, peas, fish, livestock, tallow, timber, shingles, staves, nails, bricks, sugar, spirits, and finished goods.⁷⁰ These types of commodities were essential to the local economy, not only for generating

⁶⁶ Wilson Angley, "Port Bath, North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Compilation of Records," Report to the Division of Archives and History (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), 1.

⁶⁷ Goodall, 8.

⁶⁸ Saunders, ed., CRNC, 5: xliii; Angley, 4.

⁶⁹ Angley, 92-93; Watson, Latham, and Samford, 61.

⁷⁰ Angley, 10-32, 86-91.

revenue, but also as a means of direct exchange, given that most area residents conducted their daily business operations through a system of collateral bartering.⁷¹

The colonial government of North Carolina based its currency on the English pound, but due to the strictly regulated mercantilist flow of specie back to the motherland, actual coinage was in extremely short supply. Even as late as 1765, Governor Tryon protested that "little or no specie" circulated in the coastal communities of North Carolina.⁷² Even while detailed documentation related to Port Bath's commerce is limited, it appears certain that customs officials administered to both internal and external trade by gathering tonnage duties, inspecting vessels, ensuring proper cargo documentation, and enforcing all the supplementary aspects of the Navigation Acts.⁷³

Bath's political prestige peaked in the mid-eighteenth century when Governor Gabriel Johnston (now representing the Crown in place of the Lords Proprietors) convened his governing council there in 1735, 1744, 1746, and 1752.⁷⁴ The year 1729 saw the transfer of all governmental authority in colonial North Carolina from the Lords Proprietors to King George II. Each of the Proprietors, with the exception of John Lord Carteret, sold their interests, placing the Carolinas under Royal authority (with the exception of Lord Carteret's subsequently formed Granville District, which includes portions of present-day Edgecombe and Pitt Counties).⁷⁵ Both colonial governments operated in very nearly the same manner, with a regional governor, governor's council,

⁷¹ Alan D. Watson, *Money and Monetary Problems in Early North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1980), 4-5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷³ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 54.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁵ Merrens, 24.

General Assembly, and an arrangement of precinct and county courts.⁷⁶ Royal control remained in North Carolina until the start of the Revolutionary War. The colony's capital shifted several times between Edenton, Bath, and New Bern as political pressures and preferences shifted from one gubernatorial administration to the next.

With incoming populations migrating further to the south and west, and maritime commerce strengthening elsewhere along the colony's rivers and sounds, Port Bath faced increased competition from more productive and strategically located communities (including those upriver on the Tar from the 1750s on). As early as 1730, Port Beaufort, on the north side of Old Topsail (Beaufort) Inlet, began to assume customs jurisdiction of Neuse River shipping, and despite a still active waterfront, Bath's commercial view became increasingly more localized. Additionally, with its narrow harbor inlet, excess of shoal water, difficult ferry crossing (across the open Pamlico to Bond's Ferry), and unfortunate exposure to prevailing summer winds from the southwest, Port Bath's maritime shortcomings gradually became more problematic.⁷⁷ Often times, crews needed to lighter their cargoes onto smaller vessels for the final passage to Bath, triggering inconvenience, delays, and increased freight costs.

By 1760, with the colonial government now meeting in New Bern, Port Bath became the second least productive North Carolina Customs Districts, competing with Ports Beaufort, Brunswick (Wilmington), Currituck (the least active), and Roanoke

⁷⁶ Alan D. Watson, "Overland Travel in Colonial North Carolina," (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 1966), 15.

⁷⁷ Lawrence E. Babits and Annalies Corbin Kjorness, "Final Report on an Archaeological Survey of the Western Shore of the Pungo River from Wades Point to Woodstock Point," Report to the State Historic Preservation Office, North Carolina Division of Archives and History (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University, Program in Maritime History and Underwater Archaeology, 1995) 2; Watson, Latham, and Samford, 79; Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 5: 315-316.

(Edenton).⁷⁸ On the eve of the American Revolution in 1771, only seven vessels officially called at Port Bath.⁷⁹ With its weight as a political and commercial transportation center diminishing and most incoming Pamlico settlers moving further upriver along the Tar, colonial Bath's rise to prominence reached its apex (Figure 9).

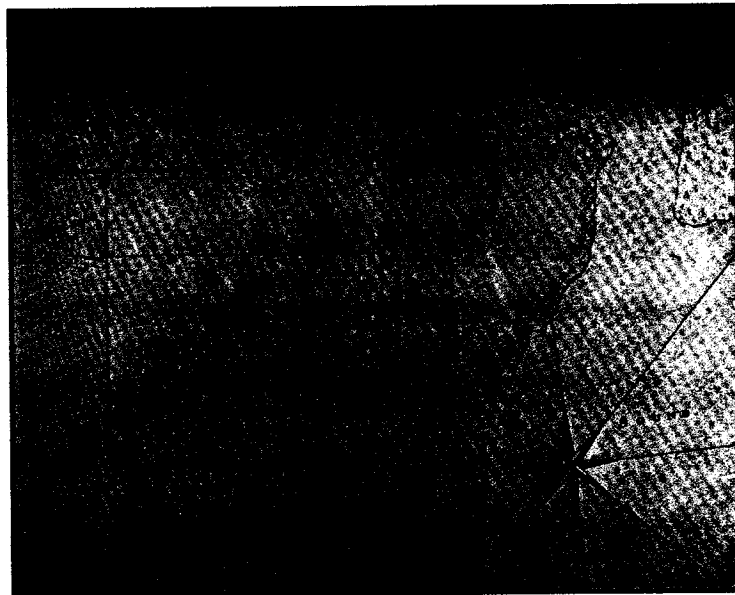


Figure 9: Claude Joseph Sauthier's 1769 Map of Colonial Bath, North Carolina.⁸⁰

Upstream Passage: The Birth of Colonial Communities on the Tar River

Washington

During the Tuscarora War, warring Natives completely destroyed every Pamlico River plantation with the lone exception of one belonging to planter Lionel Reading.⁸¹ Reading had the good judgment to locate his homestead on an elevated bluff along the river's southern shore where local militia maintained a defensive stronghold during the

⁷⁸ Anglely, 3; Merrens, 88.

⁷⁹ Anglely, 4.

⁸⁰ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 37.

⁸¹ Paschal, "In the Beginning," 1.

conflict. The site is located near present-day Hill's Point, on the northwest shore of Blount's Bay, approximately ten miles west of Bath. Potsherds and chert fragments discovered during an archaeological survey by William Haag indicate that at one time the site was also an indigenous riverfront village.⁸² A good deal later during the American Civil War, Confederate soldiers utilized this strategic vantage point – a position from where river traffic can easily be observed and scrutinized – as an armed earthworks fortification.

Following the Tuscarora War, colonists began to resettle along the Tar-Pamlico River. In July 1726, the Lords Proprietors granted a 337 acre parcel of riverfront property – which encompassed a considerable portion of present-day Washington, North Carolina – to Christopher Dudley. Very shortly thereafter, Dudley transferred the land to merchant Edward Salter, who in turn sold it to planter John Worley.⁸³ Worley constructed a home there, which is thought to be the first residential structure built on land now belonging to the town of Washington, NC. Three years after taking ownership of the land, Worley sold his entire plantation to Captain Thomas Bonner, who built a new homestead on a point of land a mile upstream where the river narrowed, and named it Bonner Hill.⁸⁴

In 1748 and again in 1751, the elder Bonner divided a large share of his landholdings among his sons James and Thomas, Jr. James called his farm "Pea Town," and in 1758 sold a small parcel of acreage to Edgecombe County merchant Aguila Sugg

⁸² William G. Haag, *The Archeology of Coastal North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 57.

⁸³ Reed, 103.

⁸⁴ Paschal, "In the Beginning," 2; Reed, 104;

with the apparent intention of starting a waterfront business district. Shortly afterwards, Sugg constructed a riverside wharf and warehouse from where he began to operate a small commercial shipping venture. Slaves usually poled, warped, or drifted sturdy, rectangular, flat-bottomed vessels along the river to transport naval stores and other harvested agricultural products to and from Sugg's warehouse.

The Bonner and Sugg's transaction followed the 1739 General Assembly restructuring of North Carolina's original county governments. Officials converted all individual precincts within the established counties of Albemarle and Bath into separate county governments of their own, significantly expanding local authority over time.⁸⁵ Beaufort Precinct became Beaufort County; Edgecombe Precinct (upriver along the Tar to the northwest) became Edgecombe County, and so on. Sugg's purchase also came shortly after the 1756 relocation of Beaufort County's courthouse from Bath Town onto the nearby property of James Bonner's brother, Thomas. County residents, concerned over the difficulties of traveling to Bath for official business functions, petitioned the legislature to move the courthouse to a more accessible location.⁸⁶ Upriver from Bath, the Pamlico River narrows dramatically, inviting improved crossings, tighter control over river traffic, and increased protection for vessels from seasonal storms. Bath officials fought the move, but most area residents found the Bonner plantation much better suited for local transportation and communication. Within a year of the petition, local craftsman Frederick Hargott completed the new courthouse, along with a pillory and jail, and the small community on the Tar River with no official name continued to expand.

⁸⁵ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

During the years that followed, a small working settlement emerged in the shadow of Pea Town, which residents unofficially referred to as Bonner Town or Forks of the Tar (likely due to the nearby split at Chocowinity Bay).⁸⁷ Local merchants, such as family members Jacob, Thomas, and John Gray Blount, used the river to ship quantities of goods both to and from the area.⁸⁸ In 1761, Jacob Blount and Richard Blackledge opened a mercantile store and shipping enterprise in Bonner Town, which began a long and prosperous business relationship in the area. The families, with the use of slave labor, eventually operated a grain mill, several sawmills, and a naval stores distillery. In addition to mercantile interests, records indicate that local craftsmen built at least one large vessel nearby prior to the Revolution, a seventy-ton brig christened *Acorn* in 1769.⁸⁹ The assembly of a local maritime infrastructure was underway in Bonner Town. Henry Mouzon acknowledged the progression in 1775 on his map of the Carolinas, illustrating the Bonner family name next to a series of structures between the river and adjacent horse-path (which led from the Pungo River to Tarboro and Halifax) at present-day Washington (Figure 10).⁹⁰

In 1771, James Bonner petitioned the General Assembly of North Carolina for the authorization to create an official community on the periphery of the plantation. In 1775, Bonner conducted a lottery where each prospective property owner purchased a draw for five pounds with winners acquiring an opportunity to obtain individual parcels of land in

⁸⁷ Paschal, "In the Beginning," 2.

⁸⁸ Keith, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers*, Vol. 1, 1764-1789, xv-xix.

⁸⁹ Still, and Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database."

⁹⁰ Henry Mouzon, Jr., "Mouzon Map, 1775" (Greenville, NC: Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University).

the new community.⁹¹ By year's end, Bonner finalized the results and issued the initial deeds and lot numbers to John Cowper, Henry Erwin, William Grove, and the merchant partnership of Scott, Erwin, and Cowper. The first town commissioners were local landowners Henry Bonner, Edward Salter, John Cowper and Joseph Blount.⁹² As a group, they were responsible for surveying boundaries, establishing common areas and paths, determining appropriate locations for commercial structures and public buildings, and negotiating the sale of individual parcels of land to incoming residents.

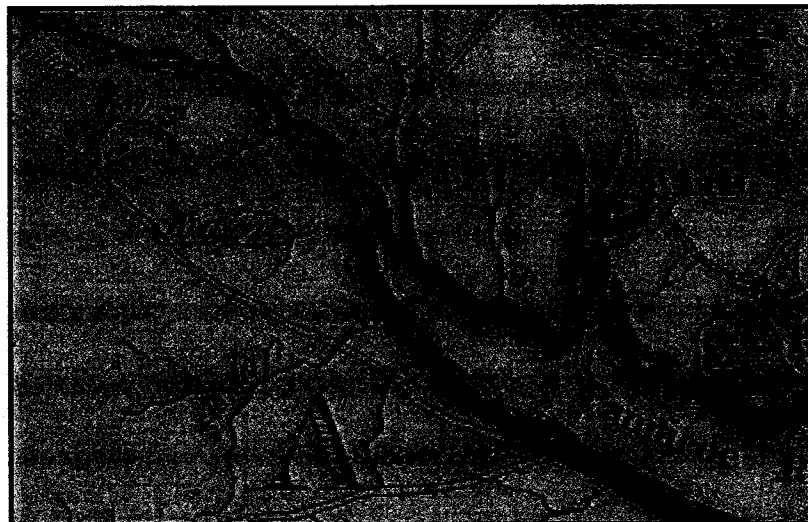


Figure 10: Detail of Henry Mouzon's 1775 Map of the Carolinas showing areas in the vicinity of Bonner and Bath, NC.⁹³

During the years of the Revolutionary War, North Carolina residents utilized Tar-Pamlico resources to help subsidize the American rebellion. Continental soldiers and militia took advantage of local plantations in an ongoing effort to assemble and distribute

⁹¹ Reed, 104-105.

⁹² Paschal, "In the Beginning," 2.

⁹³ Mouzon, Jr., "Mouzon Map, 1775."

agricultural foodstuffs in support of the army.⁹⁴ Unlike the port cities of Wilmington, Charles Town, and Savannah, Bonner Town remained in American hands throughout the conflict and served as a supply depot and support terminal for North Carolina merchant vessels, privateers, and their associated prizes.⁹⁵ The Blount family oversaw the construction of storehouses and wharves on the commercial waterfront as well as adjacent Castle Island. James Bonner served the cause as a militia colonel, while in 1778, his brother Thomas recruited local patriots and led them under his command from Bath to Halifax, North Carolina.⁹⁶ It was there just two years earlier on 12 April 1776 that North Carolina delegates voted to endorse American independence.⁹⁷ Called the Halifax Resolves, North Carolina was the first American colony of the thirteen to render such an ambitious (and treasonous) pronouncement.

The Revolutionary cause also benefited from the region's abundance of longleaf and white pine trees, allowing the production of rosin, caulk, pine tar, barrel staves, squared logs, and spars for naval vessels and privateers. In late 1775, officials of the North Carolina's Provincial Council ordered that three brigs be outfitted for the defense of coastal interests.⁹⁸ Converted from merchant ships, shipwrights and sailors armed the vessels with carriage and swivel guns, and in the autumn of 1776 commissioned them *General Washington*, *King Taminy*, and *Pennsylvania Farmer*. When not acting as

⁹⁴ Phillips Russell, *North Carolina in the Revolutionary War* (Charlotte, NC: Heritage Printers, Inc., 1965), 13.

⁹⁵ Michael R. Hill, "Historical Research Report: The Waterfront Area of Washington, North Carolina," (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1984), 3-4; Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 15:573.

⁹⁶ Paschal, "In the Beginning," 2; Watson, Latham, and Samford, 109.

⁹⁷ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 10: 512.

⁹⁸ William N. Still, Jr., *North Carolina's Revolutionary War Navy* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1976), 6.

privateers or protecting North Carolina's shipping (often with mixed results), the vessels served as merchant craft themselves, frequently transporting supplies of salt and tobacco to be sold in support of local militia.⁹⁹

In addition to these three vessels, officials from Virginia and North Carolina authorized the construction of two armed row galleys with ten guns each to augment the scope of protection.¹⁰⁰ Built in South Quay, Virginia (north up the Chowan and Backwater Rivers) and outfitted with funds from North Carolina, officials commissioned the vessels *Caswell*, after North Carolina's first continental governor Richard Caswell, and *Washington*, after General George Washington. During their time in service, the vessels met with limited success, often finding themselves up against British naval complements of superior weight and firepower.¹⁰¹

During the war, Royal Navy vessels launched raids against the port communities of Brunswick, Wilmington, Ocracoke, and Edenton, while English privateers often took American ships as prizes as they navigated along the Carolina coastline. A notice in the *New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury* printed 12 January 1778 reported:

The Prize-master says, that no less than 12 Sail of Rebel Vessels were taken in one Day off the Carolinas, by His Majesty's Ships on that Station, and sent to Augustine [Florida].¹⁰²

Even so, British ships on the North American Station did not critically affect North Carolina's trade with the West Indies or other overseas ports during the conflict.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-22.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰² Michael J. Crawford, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, Vol. 11, 1778 (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 2005), 101.

¹⁰³ Still, Jr., *North Carolina's Revolutionary War Navy*, 2.

Admiral Lord Richard Howe never had a sufficient quantity of ships to blockade the entire length of the American coastline; therefore, his priorities were to deny access to the larger ports of New England and the mid-Atlantic, as well as Charleston, South Carolina.

A lack of shallow draft vessels and local knowledge concerning the soundings, shifting shoals, and irregular currents of North Carolina's inlets, sounds, and rivers, kept the enemy fleet from seriously affecting inland trade as well. The barrier islands, once a detriment to transportation and trade, now acted as a partial protective shield against the troublesome enemy fleet.¹⁰⁴ Revolutionary officials and merchant sailors developed strategies to move military and commercial goods up and down the coast through a combined system of waterways and overland routes. Necessary provisions were often in short supply as trade within British ports was eliminated. Inflation soared, and the efforts required to keep lines of trade and communication open were laborious and costly. Maritime commerce and military supply were the lifeblood and future hope of North Carolina and the burgeoning republic, and every viable endeavor needed to be made in order to safeguard their success. In a 1778 letter to his father across the Atlantic in England, New York loyalist John Cruden, Jr. declared:

...there is an amazing quantity of goods brought in to North Carolina, and that Virginia and Maryland are supplied from that quarter.

If Lord Howe would only grant Letters of Marque to the Merchants of this Town. I am convinced much good would follow from the measure – the Rebell Army have received every Necessary in that round about way, and the insignificance of the place (Oacrecock) prevented Lord Howe from Sending vessels to cruise there... if they were prevented from having any kind of Trade, the good effects would soon be seen. I hope your Government on the other side of the Water will think differently from his Lordship, and give every

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Crittenden, *The Commerce of North Carolina, 1763-1789* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1936), 122.

encouragement to cut the Trade of the Southern colonies... let them have no Trade to the Southward and no Privateers to the Northward, and all will yet be well.¹⁰⁵

In an appeal for the defense of regional trade, officials also made the first reference to the town of Washington, North Carolina. An entry in a Halifax dispatch journal dated October 21, 1776 stated:

Resolved that Captain John Forester, commander of the armed brig, the *General Washington*, now lying at Washington, do proceed with all possible dispatch to Ocracoke bar and there protect the trading vessels.¹⁰⁶

James Bonner made another reference to the town two months later, after selling half-acre lot number fifteen to shoemaker and future tavern owner George Horn. Officially witnessed by John Fullin and Henry Lewcas, Bonner recorded the Beaufort County property as located "in the town of Washington."¹⁰⁷ Town officials and local residents soon adopted the new designation, and following the war it became the first community in the newly formed United States to be named in honor of General George Washington. In 1782, the North Carolina General Assembly at Hillsboro formerly incorporated the town as "Washington," and from hence forward it would be so recognized.¹⁰⁸ Traveler, Robert Hunter described the waterfront community in a journal entry dated 14 June 1786.

Washington is situated on the Tar River, which lower down at Bath yakes the name of Pamlico. The houses are all wood, without either form or regularity. At present the whole town does not contain above two or three hundred inhabitants, but they are building very fast... Washington is about ninety miles from the sea Ships of four hundred hogsheads sail from hence. They load them with flats that carry sixty or seventy hogshead each... They are now building here a ship of six hundred hogsheads, rather too large, I fancy, for the navigation of this river,

¹⁰⁵ Crawford, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, Vol. 11, 1778, 221.

¹⁰⁶ Paschal, "In the Beginning," 2.

¹⁰⁷ Reed, 105; Paschal, "In the Beginning," 4; Pauline M. Worthy, "The Town Develops" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 8.

¹⁰⁸ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 24: 458-459.

which is rendered difficult by a shoal about a mile below the town... Their exports are chiefly tobacco, which they send to Europe, tar, turpentine, naval stores, lumber, and pork, which they send to the West Indies, for which they import sugar, molasses and rum.¹⁰⁹

Tarboro

In the years immediately preceding Christopher Dudley's original land grant in 1726, small groups of settlers began to migrate further inland on the northwestern section of the Tar River and south from the Roanoke to settle in the colony's Bertie Precinct. By 1723, approximately twenty families lived along the shores of the Tar River in this region.

Among the freeholders here in 1723, were James Thigpen, Thomas Elliot, Paul Palmer, James Anderson, Francis Branch, Samuel Spruill, James Long, Thomas Hawkins, William Burgis, [and] William Arrenton.¹¹⁰

Land in the area was plentiful and inexpensive and increasing numbers of colonists, who brought along African slaves, came to establish homesteads nearby. In 1732, local residents petitioned Governor George Burrington in Edenton for the creation of a new, separate precinct in southern Bertie Precinct.¹¹¹ The General Assembly approved the measure and named the newly formed precinct "Edgecombe," in honor of Richard First, Baron of Edgecombe, of the Manorial House of England. The new division extended from the southern bank of the Roanoke River to an area along the Tar River near the former Tuscarora settlement of King Blount's Town and west into present-day Wilson and Wayne Counties.

¹⁰⁹ Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinning, ed., *Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786, Being the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter Jr., a Young Merchant of London* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1943), 275-276.

¹¹⁰ J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina*, rep. (Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc. 1979), 18.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

Life in early Edgecombe Precinct was no less difficult than in any other rural region of eastern North Carolina at the time. Settlers along the river needed to clear heavily forested land for livestock, drain swamps for farming, and erect houses and outbuildings for shelter. In 1744, the Earl of Granville, son of former Lord Proprietor Lord Carteret, took control of Edgecombe County as part of the Granville District.¹¹² The action increased controversy over land rights, illegal rent fees, and agricultural revenues. Moreover, it produced mounting disquiet among local settlers in a precinct whose population was on the rise. The lack of a proper county seat along the river added to the difficulties (Enfield and Halifax were the closest). An absence of public buildings meant no court activities or community meetings and limited possibilities for trade. Quantities of food were often in short supply and hostile encounters with misplaced Native Americans an ever-present threat. Several bands of Tuscarora still remained in the region, and it was not until local militia put down an Indian uprising in 1754 that their numbers eventually dwindled.¹¹³

Edgecombe County colonists, with only limited provincial support, continued to shape the landscape. Very few passable roads existed at the time. Those that did were both inadequately marked and of extremely poor quality, usually amounting to nothing more than a narrow dirt path wide enough for a small two-wheeled cart to pass (virtually no four-wheeled vehicles existed in the area prior to Revolution).¹¹⁴ However, in 1756, new laws allowed county residents to use tax revenues for the improvement of roads and

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹⁴ Alan D. Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 16.

construction of bridges, used most often to access town centers, ferries, mills, and warehouses.¹¹⁵ Within the first few years, public money and local labor enabled nearly a dozen bridges to be built, including a toll crossing over the Tar River operated by local landowner Captain Joseph Howell. Several years later, following complaints from area residents, Howell's bridge was replaced by a larger structure, believed to measure over 500' in length, which remained free to those traveling over it.

Late in the summer of 1760, Howell, who also maintained a local tobacco inspection station on the river, sold 150 acres of land to a newly formed group of commissioners for the establishment of a centralized town in the village of Tarr Burrow.¹¹⁶ The primitive community was located on a horseshoe bend in the river sixty miles upstream from Bath. Founders saw potential in its location at the head of reasonable sailing navigation, and an ideal place for the construction of a trading terminal on the upstream end of the Tar-Pamlico River corridor. Captain Elisha Battle, Benjamin Hunt, Esq., the Reverend James Moir, Captain Aquila Sugg (the same merchant who purchased downriver waterfront property from James Bonner just two years prior), and merchant Lawrence Toole obtained the deed for 5 pounds with the stipulation that later proceeds (totaling 2,000 pounds) would come from the sale of individual parcels of land. The group set about planning the town by surveying 121 individual half-acre lots for both homes and businesses and designating fifty acres for town common areas (Figure 11). On November 30, 1760, the General Assembly of North Carolina approved and chartered

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19-20; Loretta Lautzenheiser, "Archaeological Survey of US 64 Relocation, Tarboro to Parmele, Edgecombe, Martin, and Pitt Counties, North Carolina" (Tarboro, NC: Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., 1989), 23; Watson, "Overland Travel in Colonial North Carolina," 32.

¹¹⁶ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 35.

the new community, and four years later in 1764, Tarborough (later shortened to Tarboro) became the Edgecombe County seat.¹¹⁷

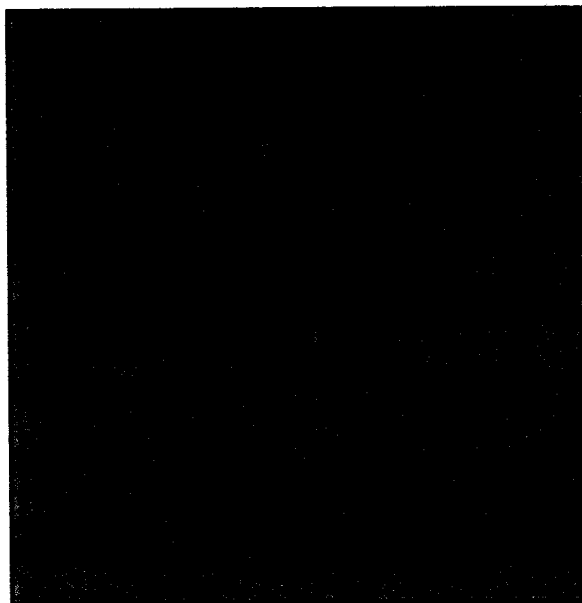


Figure 11: The original 1760 Tarboro town plan, with the Tar River shown at its base.¹¹⁸

Also in 1764, and once again in 1766, Joseph Howell added a riverside warehouse in Tarboro next to the original tobacco inspection station established in 1756.¹¹⁹ The regional cultivation, storage, and shipment of tobacco continued to increase despite a lack of encouragement on part of the government. For his service as inspector, however, Howell received an annual salary of forty pounds. A decade later during the years of the American Revolution, tobacco became such a vital staple that government officials increased the quantity of paper notes based upon local reserves, and allowed soldiers and residents to use these as real money. The practice was not entirely uncommon. At

¹¹⁷ Monika Fleming, *Edgecombe County Along the Tar River* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 19-20.

¹¹⁸ Fleming, 17.

¹¹⁹ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 330-331.

different times throughout the 1700s, officials regulated notes based upon indigo, hemp, and animal skins for currency exchange.¹²⁰ Processed grains also continued to have considerable value, and several local planters constructed grist mills in the Tarboro area immediately prior to the Revolution. Peter Hines built a mill near Hendricks Creek in 1772, and Newit Pittman on Buck Swamp shortly thereafter. Moses Horn built his mill in 1774, Will Barnes in 1775 on Stoney Creek, and Isaac Sessum on Fishing Creek in 1775.¹²¹ Merchants and planters shipped surplus tobacco and grain reserves down the Tar River to Washington in plantation flatboats at elevated prices, where much of it was then dispatched to markets around the world.

Prior to the Revolution, in response to the controversy over England's Stamp Act of 1765, residents of Tarboro and Edgecombe County formed a local chapter of the Sons of Liberty and raised a militia of over 1,300 men, an impressive number in a county of only approximately 4,000 rurally dispersed residents (which included 1000 slaves).¹²² By the time war broke out on the commons of Lexington Green in 1775, many leading Edgecombe citizens were already involved in patriotic causes. Elisha Battle of Tarboro, one of the original town commissioners, participated in the Provincial Councils of 1775 and 1776 and led the local Committee of Safety (an organization wholly devoted to American independence and against British trade relations and loyalist interference). Tarboro resident, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Irwin helped put down a loyalist conspiracy in the town (one of several in North Carolina), and was later killed in Pennsylvania at the

¹²⁰ Watson, *Money and Monetary Problems in Early North Carolina*, 6; Schopf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783-1784* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 61.

¹²¹ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 341.

¹²² Fleming, 21.

Battle of Brandywine.¹²³ His commanding officer (and subsequent North Carolina governor) Colonel Alexander Martin praised Irwin's sacrifice:

This brave officer greatly distinguished himself under my command in the 8th Infantry at Chad's Ford, and in general did honor to that corps commanded by General Maxwell.¹²⁴

Historians believe that as many as 400 Edgecombe County soldiers fought the British during the war, some in battles far from the banks of the Tar River, and others when the army of General Charles Cornwallis passed through Edgecombe County on its march north to Yorktown, Virginia in 1781. As the British troops moved forward, local militia skirmished with Lt. Colonel Banastre Tarleton's advance guard after hastily erecting an earthworks defense on the outskirts of Tarboro. The following day, the two sides clashed once again on the north side of town at Swift and Fishing Creeks while General Cornwallis waited just to the south at Cromwell's Plantation.¹²⁵ The British pressed on, but not before seizing supplies and provisions from area residents. Several months later, Tarboro escaped serious harm from the British once again. A raiding party sent north from Wilmington to sack the town, turned back fearing a rumor that Continental General Anthony Wayne's men were preparing to move against them.

Following the conflict, as Edgecombe County population and commerce expanded, North Carolina officials considered Tarboro as a choice for state capital.¹²⁶ Ultimately, the legislature chose New Bern as the best location from where to lead, but Tarboro was well represented and continued to grow with its newfound political

¹²³ Ibid., 22-23.

¹²⁴ Russell, 117-118

¹²⁵ Ibid., 248-249, 251.

¹²⁶ Fleming, 25.

influence and advantageous status as the furthest inland port on the Tar-Pamlico River.

Traveler and writer, William Attmore described the town as he saw it on 20 December 1787:

Tarborough, is the County Town of Edgecombe County; it is situated on the Southwest side of the Tar River, at a place about eighty yards over, the Town contains about twenty families, and for the size of it has considerable Trade, it seems the highest town on the river and boats seldom go above this place... There is an inspection station for the reception and examination of Tobacco, 1400 hogshead annually... We found upon our arrival the place much crowded; the Legislature being sitting for the dispatch of business – The size of the Town appear'd so inadequate to the comfortable accommodations of a Legislature... that you will not easily believe that it was possible to provide for them, Yet provided for they were, and said themselves very comfortably.¹²⁷

During the 1780s, Edgecombe County's population approached 10,000 residents, 3,000 of whom were slaves.¹²⁸ Agriculture based upon slave production dominated regional economies, and maritime transportation facilitated the road to outside markets. This path was unpredictable, tranquil one moment and hostile the next. Either way, the newly cleared landings at Tarboro (and elsewhere along the river) would not soon diminish, but instead accept a growing number of vessels at their muddy berths.

Greenville

On the first day of 1761, an area of land in western Beaufort County enclosed within the boundaries of Tyrell, Craven, Dobbs, and Edgecombe Counties, and Tranters and Chocowinity Creeks, was officially designated Pitt County, North Carolina by the General Assembly in New Bern.¹²⁹ Officials named the new district in honor of William Pitt the elder, Earl of Chatham following petitions from several Tar River landowners to

¹²⁷ William Attmore, *Journal of a Tour to North Carolina, 1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1922), 36-37.

¹²⁸ Fleming, 25.

¹²⁹ King, 42.

divide Beaufort County and accommodate the mounting official needs of a growing local population. Over the preceding few years, many incoming families settled upon a raised plateau along a straight four mile stretch of the river's southern shore midway between the river landings of Bonner Town and Tarboro (Figure 12). Colonists chose the expanse for its strategic location as a ferry and river landing, avoiding the low-lying pocosin on the river's north shore.

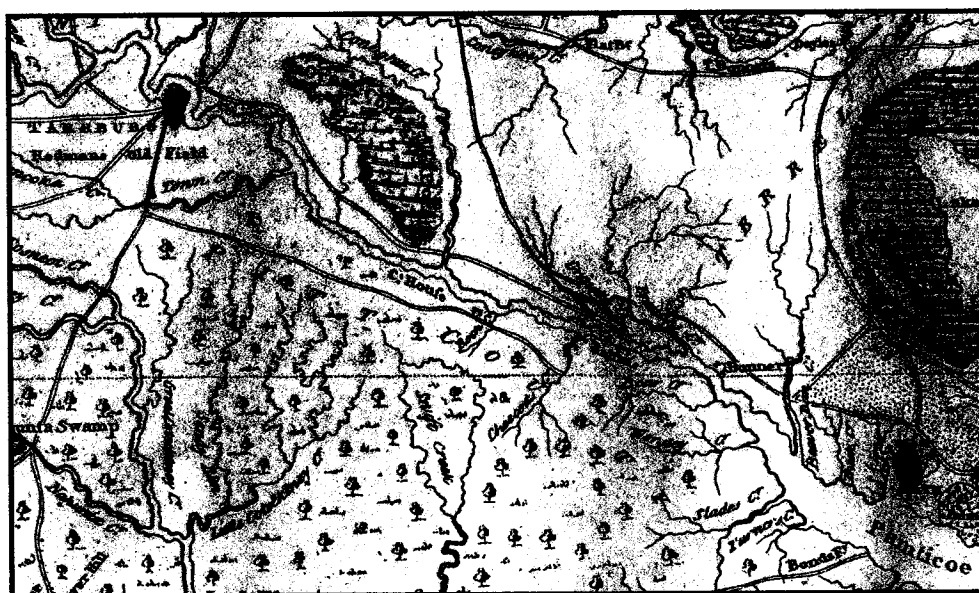


Figure 12: Detail of Captain John Collet's 1770 Map of North Carolina showing the Tar-Pamlico River corridor from Bath to Tarrburg (Tarboro).¹³⁰

In addition to the formal creation of Pitt County, the General Assembly also named Isaac Buck, John Hardee, George Moy, John Simpson, and William Spier the first county commissioners, with the opening order of business being the establishment of a regional courthouse. The commissioners initially conducted official Pitt County business in the home of John Hardee at the confluence of Hardee Creek and the Tar River,

¹³⁰ William P. Cummings, ed., "Map of North Carolina by John Collet, 1770," In *North Carolina in Maps* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1966), n.p.

pending the construction of a proper courthouse nearby (Figure 13). Pitt County was also officially considered St. Michael's Parish and offered limited religious services to the small community (there was no permanent minister), and many residents began referring to the area near the temporary courthouse as Hardee's Chapel.

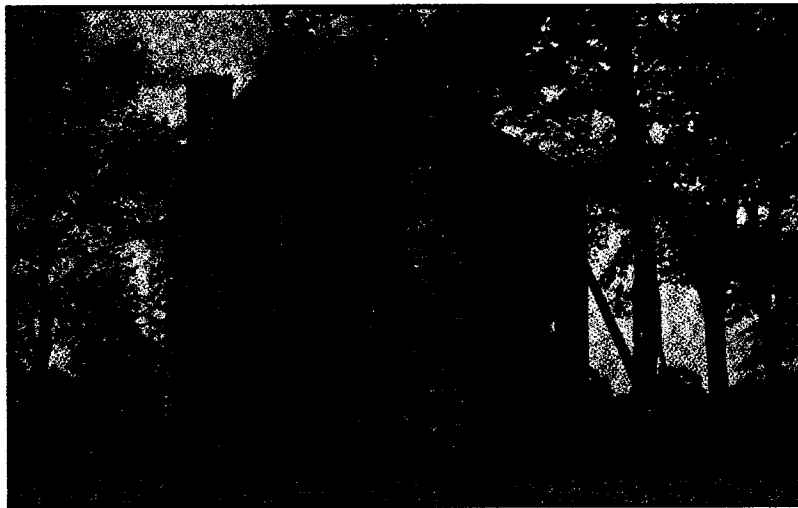


Figure 13: Photograph of the Colonel John Hardee House, c. 1910. It served as the Pitt County Courthouse from 1761 to 1774. The structure was torn down in 1926.¹³¹

Nearly two decades earlier in 1743, the General Assembly issued an act of legislation to establish official inspection warehouses on the nearby north shore landing of Red Banks and further downriver in Bath.¹³² Captain John Spier and his family originally settled in the area of Red Banks Landing following the Tuscarora War, ultimately obtaining land patents containing more than 400 acres of riverfront property.¹³³

¹³¹ King, 44; Scott Power, ed., *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina* (Pitt County, NC: The Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1991), 1.

¹³² King, 29.

¹³³ Kathy A. Southerly, "Landscapes in Transition: Red Banks Landing on the Tar River, Greenville, North Carolina" (Master's thesis, East Carolina University, 2006), 65. This is the most in-depth examination of Red Banks Landing.

Officials tasked Spier with the operation of the inspection station along with collecting local taxes and levies. In 1745, in response to increased commercial traffic along the river and adjacent streams, further legislation entitled county commissioners to “make, mend, and repair all roads, bridges, cuts, and river courses” in support of the corridor’s emerging infrastructure.¹³⁴ In 1753, officials amended the act to contain a provision for clearing the Tar-Pamlico River and its nearby tributaries of all navigational hazards hindering the administration of trade. By the following year, six years before the official founding of Pitt County, there were more than a dozen inspection warehouses and commercial landings in Beaufort and Edgecombe Counties (Table 2). Maritime competition and geographic factors forced most of these to eventually decline in importance but enabled others (along with some that followed) to expand into larger communities.

Table 2: 1754 Inspection Warehouses in Beaufort and Edgecombe Counties ¹³⁵

Inspection Warehouse	Location
Durham Creek	Beaufort County
Bath	Bath, Beaufort County
Blount’s Creek	Beaufort County
Chocowinity	Chocowinity, Beaufort County
Mill’s	Beaufort County
Traver’s	near the mouth of Tranter’s Creek, Beaufort County
Congleton’s	near Tranter’s Creek mill, Beaufort County
Grist’s	Bear Creek, Beaufort County
Salter’s Ferry (later Boyd’s Ferry)	Tar River, Beaufort County
Williams Spier’s	southeast of Red Banks, Beaufort County
Red Banks	Tar River, Beaufort County
William Williams’	Kehukee Creek, Edgecombe County
Howell’s Ferry on the Tar River	Tarboro, Edgecombe County
Howell’s Ferry on Fishing Creek	near Tarboro, Edgecombe County

In 1764, as traffic on the river and in surrounding communities continued to rise,

¹³⁴ King, 29.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 33; Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 34

John Simpson opened an additional inspection station on the opposite side of the river from Red Banks.¹³⁶ Spier also saw a need for additional services and began to operate a ferry from Red Banks Landing across the Tar River (Figure 14). Ferrymen were required by law to provide safe and adequate boats and to keep the crossing available both day and night. Roads in Pitt, Beaufort, and Edgecombe counties still remained extremely primitive by today's standards. Yet, funding from the colonial government, along with local labor and increased demand, enabled the clearing of a series of pathways along both side of the river which could access specific community landings. Between 1758 and 1775, court officials authorized the majority (approximately forty) to be built in Edgecombe County, where the local population was greatest.¹³⁷

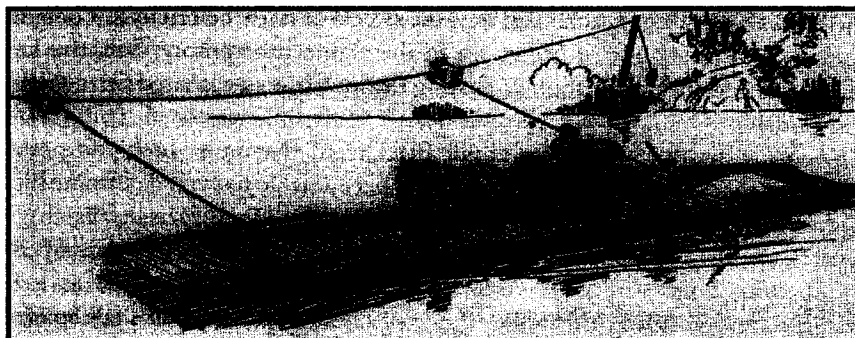


Figure 14: Sketch of a late colonial period river flatboat ferrying a horse and carriage across a river.¹³⁸

Legislation in 1764 required those operating river ferries to also establish overnight facilities for travelers passing through the area.¹³⁹ Inns, taverns, ordinaries and stables became commonplace near river crossings in the late colonial period and it is probable that there was a public house located very near to Red Banks Landing. Even so,

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹³⁷ Lautzenheiser, 22.

¹³⁸ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 79.

¹³⁹ Southerly, 67.

with the geographic advantages of higher ground and rising political influence, the center of Pitt County population and commerce emerged on the opposite side of the river. In January 1771, local resident and Assemblyman Richard Evans introduced a bill to establish a formal community on a parcel of his riverfront property nearby.¹⁴⁰ Officials passed the measure on the second attempt and named the community Martinborough for then North Carolina Royal Colonial Governor Josiah Martin (1737-1786), who commented:

The place is considered to be convenient for trade and a town being in request among the people of the county I was induced to pass this act for its erection and to accept the compliment designed to me by its name.¹⁴¹

In 1774, officials relocated the Court of Pitt County a few miles upstream to its new seat of authority. With its central location approximately 25 miles southeast of Tarboro and 22 miles northwest of Washington, Martinborough was naturally destined to become an important link in the Tar River trading and communication corridor. Thomas, William, and John Gray Blount, among their multiple ventures, already operated a shared enterprise from the three strategic locations (Tarboro, Piney Grove Plantation near Martinborough, and Washington respectively).¹⁴² In 1776, during the American Revolution, the town's namesake, loyalist Governor Martin, fled Pitt County for the safety of a Royal Navy warship in the Cape Fear River.¹⁴³

As a result of the ultimate American victory, the North Carolina General Assembly renamed the emergent community "Greensville" on 8 January 1787 (later

¹⁴⁰ King, 50.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Keith, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers*, Vol. 1, 1764-1789, xix-xxii.

¹⁴³ Still, *North Carolina's Revolutionary War Navy*, 2.

condensed to Greenville) to honor the military service of war hero Major General Nathanael Greene (1742-1786).¹⁴⁴ That same year, traveler William Attmore, described the town as a village “of about fifteen families, and is a place of some trade, the planters in the vicinity, bringing their produce to this landing. The Town stands high and pleasant.”¹⁴⁵ Several years later, President George Washington passed through Greenville on a tour of the southern states. Local residents hailed the event as momentous, however, President Washington later referred to the town as “a trifling place.”¹⁴⁶ Afterwards, the seasoned diplomat alleged that his comments were not meant as a representation of the citizenry, but merely to the quaint nature of the riverside community.

By 1788, eleven states had ratified the newly drafted United States Constitution, effectively eliminating the Articles of Confederation adopted during the Revolution.¹⁴⁷ On 21 November 1789, North Carolina became the twelfth state to join the union when state representatives officially adopted the Constitution and chose the Neuse River town of New Bern as the first state capital. Ratification of the Constitution mandated regional support for Federalist trading practices, and the selection of New Bern as capital demonstrates the economic and social importance of coastal communities to North Carolina at the time. During these early formative years, Washington, Tarboro, and Greenville were valuable links in the expanding chain of North Carolina maritime commerce. These riverfront settlements developed from the humble beginnings of

¹⁴⁴ Power, ed., *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina*, 7; Roger Kammerer and Candace Pearce, *Greenville* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 7.

¹⁴⁵ Attmore, *Journal of a Tour to North Carolina, 1787*, 31.

¹⁴⁶ King, 100; John G. Duncan, *Pitt County Potpourri* (Greenville, NC: East Carolina College, 1966), 30.

¹⁴⁷ Reed, 122-124; Goodall, 21-23.

agricultural and water-borne trade, and their potential for continued development rested squarely upon the waters of the Tar-Pamlico River.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this chapter is to chart the progress of colonial settlement on the lower Tar-Pamlico River while illustrating the key relationships to maritime commerce and its associations. Firstly and most fundamental, without the basic knowledge to construct and operate maritime transportation platforms (ocean-going ships and inland vessels), Europeans could not have settled anywhere in the New World, especially throughout the rivers and sounds of eastern North Carolina. The ability to cross the Atlantic Ocean and travel inland through a concentrated wilderness required centuries of human initiative and technological evolution. Furthermore, following the initial settlement of Europeans in the region, these same technologies (with added local influences) were required to sustain and advance individual groups of colonists and their captive slaves through the entire Tar-Pamlico corridor.

Deadly diseases, unwittingly transported through European maritime networks, cleared destructive paths through unsuspecting native populations. Abandoned riverfront settlements allowed incoming Europeans to establish community sites that were once occupied by Native American. As colonial settlement continued and conflict with native peoples became inevitable, European maritime technologies enabled promising communities to be re-supplied and protected. An examination of the relationship between the Tuscarora Indians and Carolina colonists during the Tuscarora Indian War is significant, considering the possibility of a united tribal army defeating early European

settlers and delaying regional settlement in North Carolina for decades, perhaps longer.

Following the war, the maritime shipment of locally harvested natural resources triggered a rebirth of expansion in the region. As rebirth shifted into the initial development stages of centralized maritime communities, geography, local culture, and mercantilism all played contributing roles. The riverfront harbor of Bath Town was a logical location from which to begin the process of Tar-Pamlico expansion. Strategically located near the mouth of the Pamlico River, its vessels could access inland areas, outlying supporting communities, and the Atlantic Ocean. On the opposite end of inland river navigation, Tarboro was also an obvious choice for settlement, with Greenville, the intermediate maritime link on the river, complementing both terminals. As agricultural development increased further inland so did maritime traffic, and along with increased commercial traffic came a growing inland population base. By the 1750s, Edgecombe County's population was larger than the entire expanse of Beaufort County's (Beaufort and the future Pitt combined).

All the same, several fundamental problems existed during this period. Tar-Pamlico River settlement preferences did not stem from geographic considerations alone. The southern colonial plantation system generally operated in an independent and self-reliant fashion, therefore many individual farms remained detached from emerging population centers and operated river landings of their own. This hindered development on both sides, but more so for town centers as the absence of a noteworthy merchant class (and their associated revenues) impeded centralized development. With local centers of commerce restrained by an agrarian, slave-labor based culture and a restrictive British

mercantilist economic arrangement (consider the Navigation Acts and England's suppression of colonial manufacturing), productivity and community development were significantly hindered. Large slaveholding plantation owners generally preferred this lifestyle, and England's sole priority was to be supplied with specie and the staples necessary to generate wealth. Some privately held landings on the Tar River would eventually grow into small commercial centers, but significant local development remained slow for many years. During the century that followed American Independence, local plantations and adjacent riverfront population centers worked in tandem with state and local governments to improve their circumstances, commercially and culturally linked by the corridor of the Tar-Pamlico River.

CHAPTER THREE

CROSSROAD OF INVENTIONS

Tar-Pamlico Communities in an Emergent Republic

In the early 1700s, the Tar-Pamlico River flowed through a low-lying wilderness embracing Native Americans settlements and small isolated groups of colonial homesteaders. Nearly a century later, virtually all local indigenous peoples were gone, and four small American communities stood at deliberate intervals along the river's commercial corridor. The disappearance of native settlements and formation of small town centers corresponded to similar proceedings throughout North Carolina at the time. By the close of the eighteenth century, the newly formed and more centrally located town of Raleigh had replaced New Bern as state capital, and Wilmington on the Cape Fear River, with its relative trouble-free access to the Atlantic Ocean, was North Carolina's leading port.¹

Throughout the century, Americans struggled with countless military, political, economic, and personal hardships that diminished near century's end with a victory over the British in 1783, the signing of the United States Constitution in 1787, and the election of George Washington as the nation's first president in 1789. National leaders, legislators, merchants, soldiers, sailors, and local citizens had all come together to help create an organized system of democratic government built upon a succession of local, county, state, and federal administrations. Once a collection of thirteen distant English

¹ Harry R. Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 153-154. Additional information can be found in Duncan P. Randall's 1968 article "Wilmington, North Carolina: The Historical Development of a Port City" published in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Volume 58.

protectorates, the colonies were now unified as a liberated, self-reliant, and emergent nation.

Within this air of nationalistic optimism, however, there dwelled problematic elements of disparity and detachment. In North Carolina, transportation technologies and infrastructure remained primitive, and as a result, unable to link the budding interior regions with the coast. This contributed to cases of sectionalism between eastern and western political factions, adding procedural and cultural prejudices to an already slow measure of state development.² Logistical operations during the American Revolution illustrated severe limitations in regional transport systems, and future population increases would require sweeping improvements to ensure continued settlement and commercial development within eastern North Carolina.

Inland communication and migration remained primarily dependant upon river corridors. Along the Tar-Pamlico, the population density core originally centered near Bath in Beaufort County began to shift further inland by the mid-1700s, ultimately encompassing Tarboro and Edgecombe County before 1765. Between that year and 1790, the navigable river's three-county region showed an estimated growth rate of roughly 25 percent, representing 6 percent of the state's total population (the largest concentrations at the time were in Halifax County, immediately north of Edgecombe, and Rowan County, inland along the Pee Dee River).³ Statistics from the first Federal Census

² Alan D. Watson, "North Carolina and Internal Improvements, 1783-1861: The Case of Inland Navigation," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (1997): 38.

³ William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, Vol. VII - 1765 to 1768 (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1993), 288-289, (Henceforth: Saunders, ed., *CRNC*); The University of Virginia Library, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Historical Census Browser," <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>; (Henceforth: UVA, "Historical Census Browser").

in 1790 reveal a population of 7,103 free citizens and 3,152 slaves in Edgecombe County, versus a count of 3,830 and 1,632 in Beaufort County.⁴ Pitt County's numbers fell almost directly in between those of its riverfront neighbors with 5,908 and 2,367 respectively, emphasizing increases in maritime supported population with inland migration (Table 3).

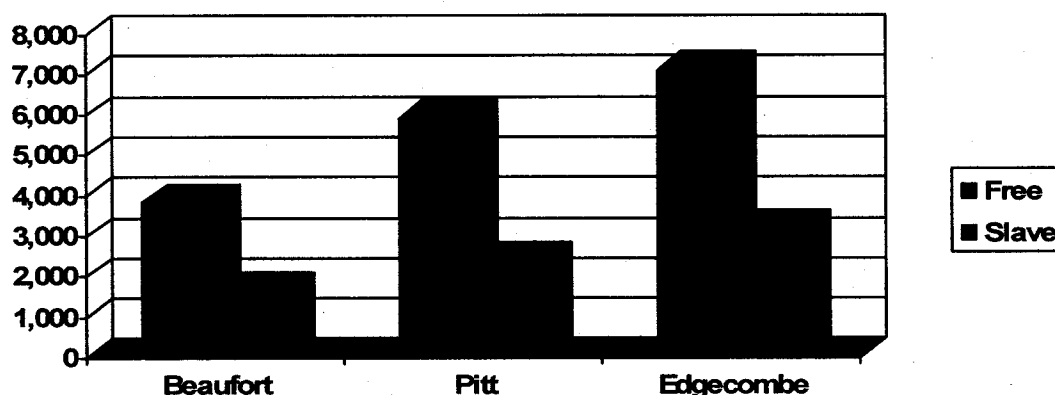


Table 3: Lower Tar-Pamlico River population by county (from east to west) in 1790.⁵

The most noteworthy local population trend of the next Federal Census, taken in 1800, was not immigration but the disparity of growth between the free and slave populations in the region. The number of free citizens in the three-county area grew by less than 1 percent (with a slight drop in Edgecombe County due to continued westward migration), while the slave population increased nearly 20 percent during the same period. Historian Walter E. Minchinton stated in a 1994 report that most slaves in North Carolina arrived via overland routes from Virginia and South Carolina (and by natural

⁴ Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, Vol. XXVI - Federal Census, 1790, 269, 541, 926.

⁵ *Ibid.*

reproduction) rather than directly through the merchant seaborne slave trade.⁶ He believes that slave traders primarily shipped captive slaves into the colony as payment for exported goods such as lumber and livestock, trading bilaterally as opposed to the more common triangular slave exchange process.⁷

Minchinton cites evidence that suggests only 3,236 slaves arrived in North Carolina via direct ocean routes through 1790 (although he maintains the number could be higher), concluding that North Carolina merchants did not possess the capital, shipping, or proficiency to transport significant numbers of slaves directly from West Africa prior to the practice being outlawed in 1808.⁸ Nevertheless, the impact of eighteenth and early nineteenth century slave labor on maritime interests and settlement in the region cannot be understated. Under extremely harsh conditions, slaves painstakingly cleared forests for riverside plantations and towns, harvested crops, processed naval stores, constructed networks of canals for land reclamation and transportation, and shipped goods to numerous ports while operating and maintaining a variety of merchant watercraft.⁹

In the early nineteenth century, while the largest segment of Tar-Pamlico residents lived near the head of reasonable sailing navigation in Edgecombe County, the most significant maritime port on the river remained downstream at Washington. Port

⁶ Walter E. Minchinton "The Seaborne Slave Trade of North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 71, no. 1 (1994): 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10, 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19, 25.

⁹ David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 2001), 4-5, 213-219; Robert S. Thompson, "A Fair Return for the Investment in Money and Labour:" Slavery from 1695 to 1802 in North Carolina's Albemarle Region" (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 2002), 97.

Bath and colonial Beaufort County relinquished the lion's share of shipping and population to the more inland communities after reaching a commercial peak in the mid-1700s. Accordingly, Bath's customs collector, Nathan Keais, kept his official shipping office and residence in Washington after 1785.¹⁰ So, too, did Port Bath commissioners Thomas Alderson, Richard Blackledge, John Bonnor, and John Gray Blount.

Bath's importance dwindled over the years but did not diminish entirely. For example, in 1793, wealthy Rhode Island merchant mariner Jonathan Marsh moved to Bath where he and his family successfully traded for many years.¹¹ Several years later, in 1824, prominent Washington landowner and naval stores merchant Joseph Bonner relocated his family and its considerable financial worth downstream to Bath. Among Bonner's holdings were the Jackson Swamp Plantation and a Bath Creek steam-powered sawmill. Jonathan Marsh's home, the Palmer-Marsh House, was built upon a foundation partially formed from stones originally brought to Bath as ship's ballast, and legend suggests that the Bonner House was partly constructed from the remains of coastal shipwrecks. Both structures exist to this day as Bath historical landmarks, archaeological sites, and tourist attractions.

By the late eighteenth century, the town of Washington, which had already proved itself an important shipping hub during the Revolution, truly emerged as the leading maritime facility on the Tar-Pamlico River. In 1784, state officials established a

¹⁰ Alan D. Watson, Eva C. Latham, and Patricia Samford, *Bath: The First Town in North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2005), 110-111; Wilson Angley, "Port Bath, North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Compilation of Records," Report to the Division of Archives and History (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), 5-6.

¹¹ Ysobel D. Litchfield, "Shipping" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 231.

maritime court there “for the more speedy Decision of Mercantile Transactions with Foreigners and transient persons & of maritime Affairs.”¹² The following year, Washington officially became the Beaufort County seat, and less than five years after that, in 1790, congressional officials saw fit to designate the commercial riverfront community a customs center and official port of entry (Figure 15).¹³



Figure 15: An 1808 depiction of early Washington, North Carolina.¹⁴

Reasons for the growing list of official designations ranged from expanded commercial interests overseas, due in part to mercantilist families such as the Blounts, to increases in area shipbuilding (Table 4-5). William Farrow (and later his son) operated the first commercial shipyard in Washington, followed by shipwrights Benjamin Russell

¹² Saunders, ed., *CRNC*, 18:199.

¹³ Watson, Latham, and Samford, 109; William N. Still, “The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina,” in *Of Tar Heel Towns, Shipbuilders, Reconstructionists and Alliancemen: Papers in North Carolina History*, ed. Joseph F. Steelman et al. (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Publications, 1981), 29.

¹⁴ *Washington and Parts Adjacent, 1808* (Washington, NC: Copy from the History/Genealogy Collection, George H. & Laura E. Brown Library).

and John Young in the last decades of the century.¹⁵ Russell and Young built several vessels for John Gray Blount as did John Gaylord and Benjamin Davis, who ran shipyards along nearby Broad Creek.¹⁶ For many years, the Blounts also contracted with shipwright Henry Tuley further downstream on the Pungo River and Slade's Creek.¹⁷ Washington shipwrights Jonathan Havens, Abner P. Neale (who operated from Castle Island), and Thomas Trotter were among those who continued the shipbuilding tradition throughout the early years of the nineteenth century. It was through collective maritime enterprise that Washington existed and continued to rise. Historian William Paschal affirmed

[that] by 1800, the pattern of Washington's business and social life had been set, and for the next sixty years the wharves of Washington teemed with the river trade that was her very life blood.¹⁸

Given that Washington became the leading port on the Tar-Pamlico River, local shipwrights were usually responsible for building the area's largest vessels. However, in 1808, New York City merchant William Rodman contracted marine craftsman Gideon Willis to construct a vessel of considerable size further upriver in Greenville, Pitt County.¹⁹

An agreement made and entered into this 18th day of March 1808 between... Wm. W. Rodman of the city of New York on the one part and Gideon Willis of Greenville, in the county of Pitt and state of North Carolina on the other part, Witnesseth that the said Gideon doth agree to finish the building of a certain vessel now on the stocks in Greenville, called in the agreement of the Carpenter

¹⁵ Litchfield, "Shipping," 230.

¹⁶ James M. Cox, "The Pamlico-Tar River and its Role in the Development of Eastern North Carolina," (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 1989), 17-18.

¹⁷ Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," 27.

¹⁸ Herbert Paschal, "In the Beginning" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 5.

¹⁹ Craven County District Court Records, 1808, North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

for building her, the *Carolina*...of One hundred and Forty tons as measured by Joel Dickerson this day.²⁰

The Greenville waterfront, located over twenty miles up the winding Tar River from Washington, was an unlikely site to construct a vessel of such proportions. Clearly, an interstate contract of this worth acknowledges the growing significance of the central inland corridor of the Tar-Pamlico River at the time.

Table 4: Chronological List of Known Vessels Constructed near Washington, NC, 1789-1812 (L=Length, B=Beam, D=Depth, in feet).²¹

Name	Type	Year	Tons	L	B	D	Comments
<i>Russell</i>	Brigantine	1789					Builder: Benjamin Russell; Owner: Blount family; taken as a prize by French privateers in 1797
<i>Hope</i>	Sloop	1790	18				
<i>Diligence</i>	Cutter	1791					One of ten revenue cutters contracted by Congress in 1790
<i>William</i>	Schooner	1791	44				Builder: Henry Tuley; Owner: Blount Family; Named for William Blount
<i>Beaver</i>	Lighter	1792					Builder: John Young; Owner: Blount family
<i>Young</i>	Brigantine	1792					Builder: John Young; Owner: Blount Family
<i>Renwick</i>	Schooner	1795	47				
<i>Union</i>	Schooner	1795	12	33	10	4	
<i>Tuley</i>	Brig	1798					Builder: Henry Tuley; Owner: Blount Family; taken as a prize by French privateers in 1799
<i>Sally Gladding</i>	Schooner	1800	57				
<i>Thomas</i>	Brig	1801	162				
<i>Jefferson</i>							
<i>Sally</i>	Brig	1802	103				
<i>Carolina</i>	Brig or Schooner	1808	140				Greenville-built
<i>Young Eagle</i>	Schooner	1810	100				
<i>Edwin</i>	Brig	1811					
<i>George</i>	Brig	1811	96				
<i>Washington Industry</i>	Ship	1812	125	97	27	13	

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ William N. Still and Richard A. Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database" (Manuscript, Private Collection of William N. Still, 2006); Michael R. Hill, "Historical Research Report: The Waterfront Area of Washington, North Carolina," (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1984), 5; Cox, 17; Litchfield, "Shipping," 234.

Table 5: Chronological List of Recorded Vessels Constructed in Pitt County, 1776-1810 (L=Length, B=Beam, D=Depth, in feet).²²

Name	Type	Year	Tons	L	B	D	Comments
<i>Peggy</i>	Sloop	1776	25				Robert Salter, owner
<i>Minerva</i>	Brig	1807	99				
<i>Charleston Packet</i>	Brig	1810	153				
<i>Carolina</i>	Schooner (?)	1808					

Upriver, Edgecombe County also continued to develop. At the turn of the century, Tarboro's commercial waterfront contained, among other things, several additional landings, warehouses (not merely for tobacco, as that particular market declined after the Revolution), blacksmiths, coopers, and tanning yards.²³ Residents operated distilleries, cabinet and carriage shops, cotton gins, looms, a snuff factory, and horse and water powered sawmills. The most common type of vessel constructed in Tarboro was the river flatboat, used to ship commodities outbound along the Tar; however, local shipbuilders constructed at least one sizable vessel in 1803, launching the 79 ton sloop *Sally* for the Blount family.²⁴

In an 1811 report to the Agricultural Society of Edgecombe County, Jeremiah Battle (grandson of Captain Elisha Battle, an original Tarboro commissioner) compiled information on the status of numerous county specifics, from the natural environment to regional business operations.²⁵ On local commercial exports, Battle wrote:

In 1811, there were 14 stores in Tarboro and 7 in other parts of the county, making 21 stores, that annually exported about 6,325 barrels corn, 6,850 bushels peas, 2,042 barrels pork, 8,210 lbs. tallow, 8,170 lbs. beeswax, 43, 240 lbs. cotton, 1,292 bushels flaxseed, 9,413 barrels naval stores, 124,300 lbs. bacon, 556

²² Still and Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database."

²³ Loretta Lautzenheiser, "Archaeological Survey of US 64 Relocation, Tarboro to Parmele, Edgecombe, Martin, and Pitt Counties, North Carolina" (Tarboro, NC: Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., 1989), 23.

²⁴ Still and Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database;" Litchfield, "Shipping," 234.

²⁵ W. F. Dancy, ed., "Agricultural Report-1811, Jeremiah Battle", *Tarboro Press* (NC), September 17, 1842, Vol. 18, No. 37.

kegs lard, 243 hogsheads tobacco, 145 barrels brandy, 73 barrels flour, 2,740 bushels wheat, 150 fur skins, 158 bushels beans, 70 bushels oats, 101 barrels black lead, [and] 3,000 lbs. beef. In addition to the foregoing statement, it may not be amiss to insert the average annual amount of produce sent out of the county by 75 farmers, which does not pass through any of the above named markets, to wit: Namely, 150 bushels of wheat, 1,375 barrels naval stores, 1,418,900 lbs. of live pork, 15,600 lbs. beef, 190 head sheep, 20,000 lbs. bacon, [and] 1,170 barrels corn; besides these articles for exportation, the town [Tarboro] is generally well supplied from the country with fresh beef, lambs, pigs, poultry, eggs, butter, honey, fruit, melons, roots, etc.²⁶

Agricultural production in conjunction with river transportation was the driving commercial force in Edgecombe County, as the majority of exported goods left the area along the river's path. Accordingly, Battle also considered the problems inherent with Tar River navigation:

[The river] is navigable a considerable part of the year for boats of a particular construction, carrying from 200 to 400 barrels as high up as 15 miles above Tarboro in a straight direction, which is over 40 or 50 by water... Its banks are in many places low and fertile, and are occasionally subject to be inundated by freshets... The commerce of this place is carried on to great disadvantage. The navigation is precarious, as there is usually a considerable part of the year, that the water is too low for boats to have an easy passage from Tarboro to Washington. Tarboro is the principal market for this and some of the adjacent counties. The produce is carried down the river to Washington in long flat bottomed boats, carrying from 200 to 400 barrels, and drawing from two to three feet water. A part of the produce is bartered in Washington for West India goods, but the greater part is shipped to the northern markets, principally to Norfolk, Baltimore, and New York, where it is sold for cash or bills, by which means the merchants here are enabled to make remittances to Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York, from whence they receive their dry goods.²⁷

In the first decades of the 1800s, as the three leading Tar-Pamlico commercial centers slowly developed, American citizens were once again tested by international dispute and military confrontation. Conflicts with England's Royal Navy over merchant

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

ship seizures and the illegal impressments of sailors led President Thomas Jefferson to impose the Embargo Act of 1807 in December of that year.²⁸ The action effectively excluded all international trade within American ports in an effort to demonstrate to England and France the advantages of American maritime commerce. Jefferson made his point, but not without extensive losses to American merchants. Prior to the embargo in 1807, exports from the United States amounted to \$108 million. During the following year, sales to overseas ports plummeted nearly 80 percent to just \$22 million, with the nation facing economic turmoil. Jefferson's successor, President James Madison, lifted the damaging policy in 1809, replacing it with a less aggressive non-trade mandate against British ports only and laws promoting neutral trade. However, international tensions with England over sovereignty and commerce remained grave, and on 18 June 1812, Madison and a decidedly Republican Congress declared war on Great Britain.²⁹

The war's effect on North Carolina came mainly from the coastal blockade enforced by ships of the Royal Navy. Similar to the American Revolution, British admirals were forced to spread their superior numbers sparingly over several hundred miles of coastline, sending vessels far from friendly ports of re-supply. As before, they also concentrated their North American efforts against larger coastal commercial centers as opposed to small interior trading communities, such as those located behind the protection of North Carolina's barrier islands. Washington once again became a base of operations for American privateers, gunboats, and coastal trading vessels intended to

²⁸ Wade G. Dudley, *Splintering the Wooden Wall: The Blockade of the United States, 1812-1815* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 2, 49.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

keep lines of commerce open.³⁰ A letter from North Carolina Congressman, William Blackledge to Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, written upon his arrival at Washington in September 1812, urged that naval protection be concentrated further to the east, near Ocracoke Island.

On my arrival at this place, I find one of the Gun boats here, & learn that their Orders are to cruise in the waters of Ocracoke... The waters of the Roanoke, Tar river & Neuse are considered by them as the waters of Ocracoke because they discharge through that inlet, yet it is obvious no enemy can get into these waters but through Ocracoke Inlet.³¹

The following month he wrote to Secretary Hamilton once again from New Bern on a matter concerning the outfitting of a Washington privateer.

Lewis Leroy Esquire, Merchant of Washington North Carolina, is the only person I know of this part of the Country who has had the spirit and enterprise to engage in fitting out a privateer. He now has a very fine new vessel built for the purpose of two hundred and forty two tons which he could and would have ready for sea in a month if he Could but procure the Cannon, Small arms, and Cutlasses... From Mr. Leroys judgment in vessels, as well as Commerce, I have no doubt... she will be as great a thorn in the enemies side as any afloat of her burden.³²

It remains unclear if Leroy's vessel ever put to sea in that capacity, however, the efforts reflect positively as an example of Washington's maritime zeal.

As for the success of Britain's blockade, naval historian Wade G. Dudley concluded that contrary to previous historical analysis "the British blockade during the War of 1812 was never the overwhelmingly successful operation painted by [Alfred Thayer] Mahan and other historians."³³ While many coastal communities struggled economically in the years before, during, and after the war, Washington's waterfront

³⁰ Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," 32.

³¹ William S. Dudley, ed., *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1985), 453.

³² *Ibid.*, 529.

³³ Dudley, *Splintering the Wooden Wall*, 160.

remained open and operational. Shipping tonnages in the port of Washington rose from 3,700 tons in 1814 to nearly 5,000 tons by 1820.³⁴ Furthermore, while Edgecombe and Pitt County's total populations (both free and slave) averaged less than 10 percent growth between 1810 and 1820, Beaufort County's jumped nearly 37 percent from 7,203 to 9,850, likely due to the war's influence on maritime Washington.³⁵ Some confusion exists concerning the accuracy of the 1820 figures due to the addition of a few demographic categories where enumerators could have inadvertently marked columns more than once. Even so, the impressive rise in Beaufort County's overall population is economically significant, demonstrating both the need and advantages of a protected inland port community during a period of war and logistical complexity.

In the years following the conflict, residents faced various financial uncertainties, including the Panic of 1819 (a national economic crisis). Tar-Pamlico communities continued to sustain themselves by means of timber production, naval stores processing, maritime transportation, and local shipbuilding. Agricultural and livestock production also remained key elements to regional stability. Shipping tonnages slipped throughout North Carolina in the 1820s (the only exception being the port of Wilmington).³⁶ Washington saw a loss of nearly 25 percent during the decade, mirroring a similar drop in the county's population rise (from an increase of 37 percent to only 11). These figures seem to indicate a compelling relationship between maritime commerce and population growth within the Tar-Pamlico's leading port community.

³⁴ Cox, 36.

³⁵ UVA, "Historical Census Browser."

³⁶ *Ibid.*; Cox, 37.

Among those contributing to Washington's development were Josiah C. Fowle and his family, who relocated from New England to Washington in 1810 to begin a merchant shipping venture.³⁷ The family's increasing command of maritime trade and transport skills complemented an already experienced nautical society, and affected Tar-Pamlico commercial and community development throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Between 1815 and 1819, the Fowle family purchased a number of sailing vessels, including five schooners, four brigs, and one sloop for use in the coastal and West Indies trades, shipping commodities as sundry as lumber, salt, and molasses.

Despite the tragic loss of Josiah Fowle, his new bride, Mary Carr, and all-hands aboard the schooner *Henrietta* on a return trip from St. Thomas in 1822, brothers Samuel R. Fowle and James L. Fowle doggedly expanded business operations by maintaining a company store, investing in complementary ventures, and hiring or purchasing additional vessels and warehouse properties along the Washington waterfront. S.R. Fowle and Son's shipping ledgers from 1834 to 1902 show the company utilized nearly 170 individual vessels (140 schooners, 17 barges, 7 steamers, and 5 brigs) to complete over 1,000 separate voyages into ports from Boston to South America.³⁸ These vessels exported over 22 million shingles, 19 million feet of lumber, 2 million hogsheads of staves, 177,000 barrels turpentine, 100,000 barrels tar, 91,000 barrels rosin, and other assorted commodities from wharves on the Tar-Pamlico River, most often returning with cargoes of molasses, sugar, and salt.

³⁷ Ann M. Merriman, "North Carolina Schooners, 1815-1901, and the S.R. Fowle and Son Company of Washington, North Carolina" (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 1996), 69-73, 79-80.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 163-170, 177-179, 183-188.

The pine forests of eastern North Carolina were active commercial environments in the first half of the nineteenth century. Continuing upon a successful history of naval stores production (the state produced three-fifths of the American supply at the end of the colonial period), exports of turpentine and rosin increased and began to replace the production of tar and pitch.³⁹ New uses for these pine by-products increased their demand. Turpentine, along with alcohol, was a basic component of camphene, which citizens utilized as an illuminant in place of declining whale oil production. Turpentine was also used as a solvent for rudimentary rubber, and rosin as a soap and lubricant.

In 1840, the United States produced 619,106 barrels of naval stores, 593,451 of which were produced in North Carolina. Beaufort, Pitt, and Craven Counties (Craven is located immediately east of Pitt on the Pamlico River) were North Carolina's top three producers, accounting for more than 50 percent of the state's total output. Historically, small farmers generated the largest share of production. However, in mid-century plantation owners and port communities entered into the trade when turpentine prices peaked to double their normal rate from \$2.50 to \$5.00 per barrel. In 1846, residents operated a total of eight turpentine distilleries of two stills each in Washington alone, and shipments of naval stores approached 75 percent of the port's total export. Over the next few years, as local pine resources moderated, naval stores production began to shift into area's south and west of the Tar-Pamlico. Nevertheless, the export of naval stores – in

³⁹ Percival Perry, "The Naval Stores Industry in the Old South, 1790-1860," *The Journal of Southern History* 34, no. 4 (1968): 512-518.

combination with timber and harvests from a rising cotton industry – was crucial to Tar-Pamlico community development until the years of the Civil War.⁴⁰

Commerce on such a scale required considerable shipbuilding, and Washington continued to contribute handily (Table 6). In 1830, Hezekiah Farrow constructed Washington's first marine railway for the construction, refit, and repair of merchant vessels. Also in 1830, freed slave, Hull Anderson established a shipyard on two waterfront lots on the north and south sides of Main Street.⁴¹ Unfortunately, Anderson lost his holdings in 1841 as a result of a General Assembly crack down on the rights of free blacks. John Myers and his sons built ships for many years in a yard on Water Street, and were also involved in the maritime coastal trade, exporting goods from Tarboro, Greenville and Washington to northern cities and also ports in the West Indies. Prior to the Civil War, they too operated a marine railway in Washington, but in 1872, during Reconstruction, the firm sold its maritime interests to the Old Dominion Steamboat Company. Other Washington shipbuilders of note included Joseph Farrow, Burton Shipp, Benjamin Hanks, William L. Lavender, Paul Cornell, and the firm of Havens, Wiswall, and Havens. The Census of 1850 listed no less than twenty-three ship's carpenters living and working in Washington, and an 1851 map of the town by J. W. Johnson shows wharves on nearly every waterfront lot from the toll bridge east to Benjamin Hanks' steam-powered sawmill.⁴² Shipbuilding in Washington peaked in the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 519, 524; Scott Power, ed., *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina* (Pitt County, NC: The Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1991), 103.

⁴¹ C. Wingate Reed, *Beaufort County: Two Centuries of its History* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1962), 172; Cecelski, 42, 54.

⁴² Louise M. Cowell, *Beaufort County, North Carolina 1850 Census: Population Schedule* (Washington, NC: Beaufort County Genealogical Society, 2000), 1-20, 70-74, 115-120; "Map of Washington, NC, 1851"

mid-1850s – just prior to the Panic of 1857 – when local craftsmen constructed a total of nine schooners, one steamboat, and a large river flat-boat.

Table 6: Chronological List of Recorded Vessels Constructed near Washington, NC, 1813-1860 (L=Length, B=Beam, D=Depth, in feet).⁴³

Name	Type	Year	Tons	L	B	D	Comments
<i>Hawk</i>		1813					Privateer during War of 1812
<i>Helen</i>	Brig	1815					Fowle, owner; J. Havens, builder
<i>Susan</i>	Sloop	1816	70	66	20	7	Benjamin Runyon, owner; one deck & mast, square stern
<i>Silenus</i>	Sloop	1816	70				
<i>Charles Hays</i>	Schooner	1817	81	64	19	7	Jerimiah Maston, owner
<i>Franklin</i>	Schooner	1820	92	69		7	William Austin, owner
<i>Phoenix</i>	Schooner	1821	107	69	22	8	Timothy Kelly, owner
<i>Sally Havens</i>	Schooner	1821	99	73	21	7	John Cruthers, owner
<i>Deborah</i>	Schooner	1822	68	66	20	6	Simeon Guthers, owner
<i>West Indian</i>	Brig	1822	104	70	21	8	Square stern
<i>Post Boy</i>	Schooner	1823	61	64	19	5	William Austin, owner
<i>Ariel</i>	Schooner	1825	94	69	20		
<i>Alpha</i>	Schooner	1826	136	22	8		
<i>Cotton Plant</i>	Schooner	1826	116	74	22	8	
<i>Tarborough</i>	Schooner	1828	93	75	21	6	
<i>Edmund D. MacNair</i>	Sidewheel Steamboat	1835	71	83	16	5	First steamer built for the Tar-Pamlico River; lost in 1841
<i>Pearl</i>	Schooner	1837	55	85	15	4	
<i>Anaconda</i>	Schooner	1838	63	60	18		
<i>Transport</i>	Schooner	1838	51	57	18	5	Joseph Robinson, owner
<i>Olivia</i>	Schooner	1839	56	62	19	6	
<i>Adeline</i>	Brig	1842	177				
<i>Comet</i>	Schooner	1842	130	80	23	8	
<i>Julia Telfair</i>	Schooner	1842	96				
<i>Martha M. Fowle</i>	Schooner	1842	67	65	19	6	
<i>Virginia</i>	Schooner	1844	31	54	14	4	
<i>Manteo</i>	Schooner	1845	147	81	23	8	
<i>Melville</i>	Schooner	1845	112	78	22	7	Samuel Fowle, owner
<i>Samuel Mitchell</i>	Schooner	1846	173	89	25	8	
<i>Sarah</i>	Schooner	1846	66	69	20	5	Joseph Roberson, John Myers, and R.C. Myers, owners
<i>Actor</i>	Schooner	1847	59	67	20	5	Joseph Roberson, owner; possibly <i>Astor</i>
<i>Benjamin F. Hanks</i>	Schooner	1847					Joseph Farrow, builder
<i>Frances Ann</i>	Schooner	1847	41	55	17	5	Square stern
<i>Independence</i>	Schooner	1847	84	72	22	6	
<i>Mary</i>	Schooner	1847	71	68	20	5	

(Greenville, NC: Map Collection #MC0015, Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University), n.p.

⁴³ Still and Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database;" Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," 34-36; Cox, 17; Litchfield, "Shipping," 230-231, 238.

<i>Rough and Ready</i>	Schooner	1847	120	77	23	7	
<i>Hornet</i>	Sloop	1848	11.3				
<i>Wave</i>	Schooner	1848	41	57	17	4	
<i>Buena Vista</i>	Brig	1849	188	94	25	8	Built of white oak and pine
<i>Frances</i>	Schooner	1850	123	78	24	8	Paul Cornell, master builder at B.A. Shipp shipyard
<i>Pacific of Washington</i>	Schooner	1850	80	70	24	6	William Farrow, owner
<i>William Shaw</i>		1850					
<i>Mary E. Pamrole</i>	Schooner	1853	150	88	24	8	
<i>George R. Dixon</i>	Schooner	1855	209		27	8	Built of white oak; Three masts
<i>Mecklenberg</i>	Schooner	1855	137	93	72	7	Samuel Fowle, owner
<i>Pathfinder</i>	Schooner	1855	428	130	29	9	James S. Robbins, John & James Tyler, owners; three masts
<i>Wilson</i>	Steamboat	1855					Havens, Wiswall, and Havens, builder
<i>Hanyeen</i>	Schooner	1856	48	55	16	5	
<i>Lucy</i>	Schooner	1856	26	48	16	3	
<i>Petrel</i>	Schooner	1856	37	71	17	4	
<i>Queen of the South</i>	Schooner	1856	355				Three masts
<i>Watauga</i>	Schooner	1856	160	99	24	7	
<i>Elisha Waters</i>	Schooner	1857	134				Built of white oak
<i>Herndon</i>	Schooner	1857	144	88	24	7	John Myers, owner
<i>Jane Campbell</i>	Schooner	1857	146				
<i>Samuel C. Ebono</i>	Schooner	1860	21	48	16		

The Influence of Early Maritime Steam Technology

Since the arrival of the first European settlers (and likely before), navigable waterways fundamentally influenced settlement along the lower Tar-Pamlico River. Access to the river's navigational corridor was the foundation for each county's major population center, a fact confirmed by the Price-Strother Map of 1808 (Figure 16). The map also illustrates the emergence of smaller landing sites spaced between private plantations and the larger transportation hubs. Areas such as Boyd's Ferry, Spears, Gorham (later Grimesland), Simpson (formerly Chatham), Ellis Bluff (an inspection

station in 1784), and Penny Hill functioned principally as public landings for the loading and unloading of agricultural products and finished goods.⁴⁴

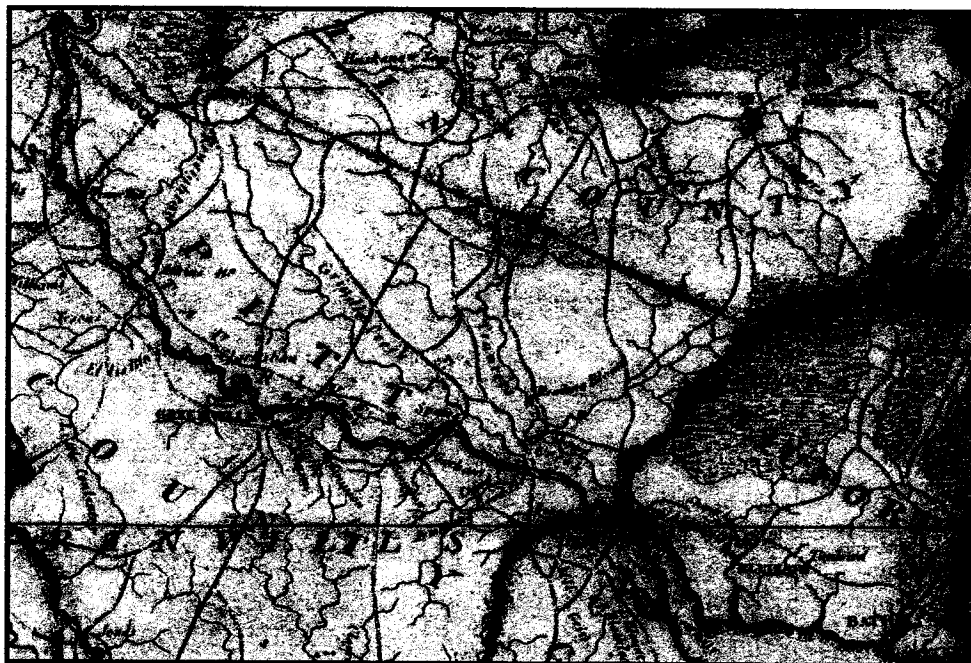


Figure 16: The Price-Strother Map of 1808 showing a segment of the Tar-Pamlico River.

Sometime around 1810 (the exact date is unknown), settlers from New England established the maritime trading community of Yankee Hall on the north side of the Tar River near Pactolus. There they constructed at least two vessels capable of offshore trade.⁴⁵ Local planter William Grimes operated a mercantile storehouse in Yankee Hall in the 1850s.⁴⁶ Pactolus, originally settled in 1790 and named for the ancient Greek (now Turkish) river of the same name, is located nearly a mile from the Tar River's shores.

⁴⁴ William P. Cummings, ed., "Price-Strother Map of 1808," In *North Carolina in Maps* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1966), n.p; Henry T. King, *Sketches of Pitt County: A Brief History of the County, 1704-1910*, rep. (Greenville, NC: Era Press, 1976), 91; Wade G. Dudley, "Phase I Survey: Maritime Sites Along the Tar River, 1700-1915" (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Manuscript, 1996), 7-8.

⁴⁵ King, 104, 107, 190.

⁴⁶ Power, 93.

The small community slowly grew over the years because of its maritime connections with Yankee Hall. Further downstream, Salter's Landing, an eighteenth century farming community, river ferry, and tobacco inspection station near Chicod Creek, was neglected and ultimately sold, likely due to the expansion of Washington's commercial waterfront. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these straightforward patterns of maritime settlement and commercial transportation continued with the arrival of inland river steamboats.

Most historians accept that the first use of steam power as a propulsion method for waterborne vessels began on the Delaware River near Philadelphia in 1787.⁴⁷ In late summer, inventor John Fitch successfully tested an ungainly floating machine driven by twelve wooden oars and powered by a steam engine inspired by Scottish engineer James Watt. Over the next two decades, the merger of steam and maritime technologies evolved by way of success and failure to relative efficiency in speed, safety, and cost. On 17 August 1807, Robert Fulton's steam-powered vessel *North River Steamboat of Clermont* began service on the Hudson River from New York to Albany, officially signaling the age of commercial steamboat transportation.⁴⁸

Elsewhere around the world at the time, sailing vessels remained the prime long distance movers of freight and passengers. Many coastal river communities also used pole-boats, flats, barges, and team-boats (a resourceful use of horse and mule power) to move cargo prior to (and after) the adaptation of steam technology.⁴⁹ Steam-powered

⁴⁷ Andrea Sutcliffe, *Steam: The Untold Story of America's First Great Invention* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 46-49.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 179-180, 186.

⁴⁹ Earl White, *Carolina Riverboats and Rivers* (Denver, NC: River Road Publishing, 2002), 10-19.

vessels would not appear on North Carolina waters until 1818, when the steamer *Norfolk* passed through Ocracoke Inlet in April on its way from Hampton, Virginia to New Bern and Elizabeth City. Fayetteville, North Carolina-built *Henrietta* followed shortly thereafter, with a regularly scheduled run along the Cape Fear River between Fayetteville and Wilmington.⁵⁰

On the Tar-Pamlico River, initial preparations for incoming steamboat traffic took the form of the Tar River Company.⁵¹ Incorporated by the state legislature in 1805, its primary function was to clear hazards along the river from as far upstream as Person County southeast to Greenville. The company's efforts were largely unsuccessful. Consequently it was replaced by the Tar River Navigation Company in 1816. The river was notorious for variable water levels, therefore officials and engineers planned the construction of a series of locks (with one just below Greenville) to help enable year-round navigation. However, political opposition, contractor disputes, lawsuits, lost documents, and financial setbacks repeatedly plagued the organization, ultimately causing its demise by 1834.

Despite the river's navigational difficulties, increased demand for agricultural exports and regional competition required Tar-Pamlico planters, merchants, and traveling passengers to take advantage of the latest maritime technologies. The closest residents had come to steam service before the 1830s were stagecoach connections between

⁵⁰ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center Manuscript, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, 1979), 6-7.

⁵¹ Watson, "North Carolina and Internal Improvements," 53.

Washington and New Bern, and from Tarboro to Edenton.⁵² J. Kelly Turner and John L.

Bridgers, in their 1920 *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina*, stated:

In 1830, the Virginia Transport Company was organized and ran wagon trains through eastern counties. This company also operated two steamboats – the *Petersburg* of 142 tons and the *North Carolina* of seventy tons – upon the Tar River. When the water was low, flats were used to carry cotton to Washington, NC for reloading on the steamers.⁵³

No further evidence of these, or any other steamboats, has yet been found indicating a commercial arrival at Washington prior to 1835.

North Carolina's internal improvement procedures generally combined private enterprise with government oversight and funding.⁵⁴ In 1835, William Tannahill and Benjamin Lavender, Washington naval stores merchants, acquired from the North Carolina General Assembly

the sole and exclusive right and privilege of using, employing and navigating all and every species or kind of boats propelled by the force of steam, on the waters of the Tar and Pamlico river, from the town of Washington upwards so far as they may think proper to go, for and during the term of fifteen years from and after the passage of this act.⁵⁵

For their part, Tannahill and Lavender were required to operate a steam vessel on the river within four years, and charge rates ten percent lower than current market standards.

The agreement not only granted them broad authority over all other steam vessels on the river, but also control of new bridge construction and the power to convert existing crossings into non-fare draw-bridges.

⁵² Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 10.

⁵³ J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina*, rep. (Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc. 1979), 350-351.

⁵⁴ Watson, "North Carolina and Internal Improvements," 38.

⁵⁵ State of North Carolina, *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at the Session of 1835*, Chapter CL (Raleigh, NC: Philo White, 1836), 111; Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 21.

In the autumn of 1835, Tannahill and Lavender launched their new steam vessel in Washington, North Carolina and christened it the *Edmund D. MacNair* (often written *McNair*).⁵⁶ The vessel was named in honor of prominent Tarboro commissioner, pioneering banker, and plantation owner Edmund Duncan MacNair, a relation of William Tannahill's who reportedly provided financing for the vessel's construction.⁵⁷ To complement the *E. D. MacNair*, Tannahill and Lavender also contracted for the construction of three additional tow-craft to increase the steamer's hauling capacity of timber, turpentine, and other assorted freight.

The *E. D. MacNair* was a side-wheeled steamer of 71 tons, measuring 84' in overall length, 17' in width, with a 7' depth of hold. A local newspaper, the *Washington Whig*, covered events surrounding the vessel's appearance on the Tar-Pamlico, reporting:

This beautiful boat, lately built in this place made her first excursion on Friday, January 15, 1836, on a trip of pleasure with a party of gentlemen and ladies aboard, proudly displaying at her stern the Star Spangled Banner of our country... The *McNair* and her tow boats of burthen are destined as if by magic to quickly bring together the upper towns on the river... She will soon commence her trips to Greenville and Tarboro. As soon as spring opens Tannahill and Lavender intend to spend thousands of dollars improving the navigation above this town. To them goes the honor of building, within our limits, the first steam-boat intended for our waters.⁵⁸

Over the course of the next few months, craftsmen finished fitting-out the *E. D. MacNair*, and the vessel began making commercial trips from Washington to Greenville. In May 1836, the steamer arrived upriver at the Tarboro waterfront for the first time to the delight of area residents. With its arrival, visitors were permitted to take excursions

⁵⁶ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 22.

⁵⁷ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., *The Story of Banking in Tarboro* (Tarboro, NC: Clayton's of Tarboro, 1969), 28.

⁵⁸ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 22; The *Washington Whig* report appeared also in the January 30, 1836 edition of the *Tarboro Free Press*, as quoted by Bridgers, Jr.

to and from the landing at Sparta in celebration of the momentous event. The 14 May edition of the *Tarborough Press* declared:

Steamboat Ahoy! We have the gratification to announce the commencement of a new era in the commercial annals of this place. On Wednesday last, the steamer *E. D. McNair*, Captain Chamberlain, arrived at this port from Washington, with freight and passengers, and gallantly anchored in our harbor amidst the roaring of cannon and other testimonials of joy with which our citizens, who thronged in crowds to the river, greeted this novel and welcome visitor. On Thursday, the public spirited and enterprising proprietors gave a general invitation to the citizens to take a short excursion in the steamer, which was gladly accepted.⁵⁹

The arrival of the steamboat *E. D. MacNair* inspired optimism to residents all along the Tar-Pamlico River, yet the promising sentiment was short-lived. The vessel, and all its associated fanfare, disappeared from the river when financial problems related to the Panic of 1837 overwhelmed Tannahill and Lavender, causing them to sell the steamer to William Southerland, a Duplin County merchant, less than a year after it made its inaugural trip to Tarboro.⁶⁰ The Panic of 1839 soon followed, and for the next five economically difficult years, the *E. D. MacNair* ran cargo along the Neuse and Cape Fear Rivers under several different owners and crews. The precise circumstances of the steamboat's end are undocumented. Thomas Singleton, a Port New Bern official, cancelled the vessel's official enrollment certificate on 29 September 1841, stating only that the vessel was lost.

During the years following *E. D. MacNair*'s departure from the Tar-Pamlico, merchants and planters continued to use the reliable but time-consuming conventional methods of shipping freight (Figure 17). Attempts at navigational improvements

⁵⁹ *Tarborough Free Press*, May 14, 1836

⁶⁰ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 25-28.

continued, however, which offered incentives to other steamboat owners to venture upon the river. By 1838, the Army Corps of Engineers had successfully removed a dangerous shoal downstream from Washington.⁶¹ In the 1840s, efforts were underway by local merchant John Myers and others to establish a dredged navigational channel from Washington to the rapids upriver at Rocky Mount, but economic conditions and progress on the river remained lean (Figure 18).

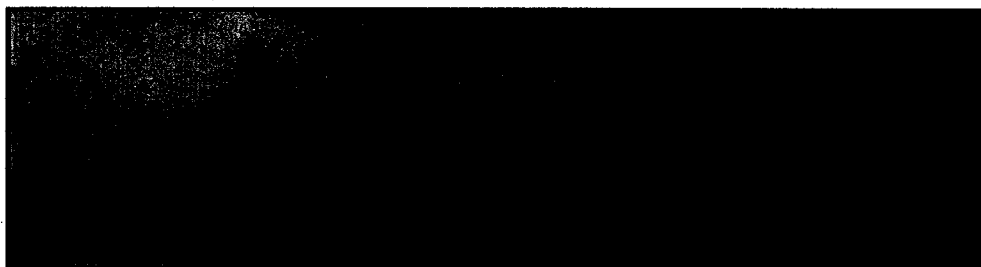


Figure 17: A conventional river flat-boat loaded with freight.⁶²

It was not until the spring of 1847 that another steamboat approached the Tar-Pamlico River on a commercial venture.⁶³ The steamer *Wayne*, owned by the New Bern firm of Dibble & Brothers, departed for Washington on 25 April

for the purpose of examining the navigation and inducements offered for steamboating on the Tar River. Should they be favorable, it is the purpose of Messrs. Dibble, her owner, to have one built to ply between Washington and Tarboro."⁶⁴

The *Wayne* successfully navigated upriver to Tarboro on two separate occasions, securing the potential arrangement, and then returned to its homeport on the Neuse River. The following year, as promised, Dibble & Brothers sent a steamboat named *Governor Graham*, and began commercial service between Washington and Tarboro. Unfortunately

⁶¹ Watson, "North Carolina and Internal Improvements, 70.

⁶² White, 15.

⁶³ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 35-40.

⁶⁴ *Republican* (New Bern), April 28, 1847.

for Tar River merchants, the firm recalled the *Graham* just two months later in order to replace the *Wayne*, which was lost in a destructive onboard fire. Another commercial steamer would not appear on the river until the following summer.

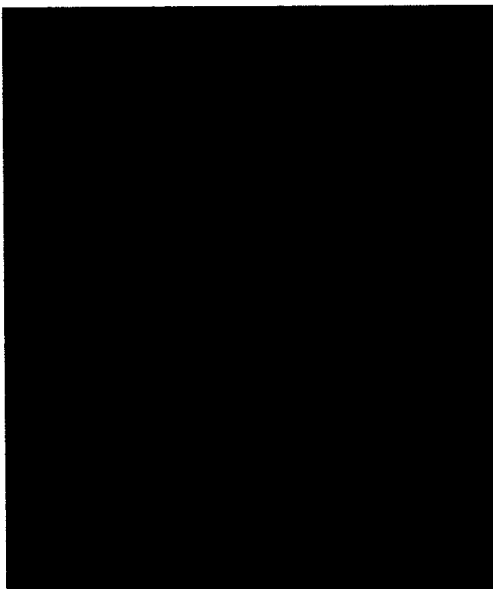


Figure 18: Digital photograph of Washington, NC merchant John Myers from the original daguerreotype.⁶⁵

The Baltimore-built *Oregon* became known in North Carolina as the first vessel to pass through the shallow, hurricane-formed “Inlet of 1846” as it sought shelter from an Atlantic storm in June 1848.⁶⁶ Afterwards, local residents began referring to the new opening as Oregon Inlet, and ultimately state officials formally adopted the name. Upon its arrival on the Tar-Pamlico River, the *Oregon*, owned and operated by three Edgecombe County merchants, began to move freight and passengers under management of the Tar River Steamboat Company. The plan of regular packet service between

⁶⁵ Myers Family Papers, (Greenville, NC: Special Collections Department, J.Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University).

⁶⁶ Matthew S. Lawrence, “A Fair Specimen of a Southern River Steamer,” *The Oregon and Tar/Pamlico River Steam Navigation* (Master’s Thesis, East Carolina University, 2003), 66-67.

Washington and Tarboro was soon spoiled when the *Oregon's* draft proved too deep to negotiate the shallow upper reaches of the channel. As a result, the following year, officials from the Tar River Steamboat Company auctioned the vessel to merchant William H. Willard. Willard subsequently placed the *Oregon* in service outbound from Washington where it apparently operated in a commercial capacity until the Civil War.⁶⁷

Inland steam navigation on the Tar River took multiple attempts over several years before maritime officials could establish a viable foothold. John and Reading Myers, Washington merchants and shipbuilders, began their endeavor in the summer of 1849 with the 35-ton stern paddlewheel steamer *Amidas*.⁶⁸ After multiple attempts to negotiate the obstruction-filled river above Greenville and efforts by Myers and others to clear the navigational channel, the vessel at last arrived in Tarboro on 27 October. The *Tarboro Press* announced:

Steamer *Amidas* – This beautiful little steamer entered our waters for the first time on Saturday last gallantly towing four flat-boats laden with goods, wares, and merchandise, etc., for the merchants of this place. She has been repeatedly here since, and promises to be a fair experiment of navigating Tar River by steam, being well adapted to that purpose, Success attend her.⁶⁹

With the arrival of *Amidas*, commercial steamboat service, erratic as it was, finally began to take place upon the Tar River.

Navigational and logistic difficulties remained, however. During the three years that followed the initial appearance of the *Amidas*, merchants became increasingly more dependent upon the steamboat's arrival. This caused commodity prices to fluctuate with

⁶⁷ Ibid., 69, 84-88.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 69-72; Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 39.

⁶⁹ *Tarboro Press*, November 3, 1849.

the river's changing water levels, generating local anxieties and economic uncertainties.⁷⁰ Government funding for channel improvements was slow in coming, and as the corridor between Greenville and Tarboro began to fill with sediment and snags once again, John Myers was forced to discontinue regular steam service to landings above Greenville. For Myers and Son, reliability outweighed distance once postal officials awarded the firm a contract to transport mail between Washington and Greenville in 1852.⁷¹

As for improvements, the North Carolina General Assembly offered financial support in the amount \$25,000 in 1849 and \$15,000 in 1855, but actual progress on the river was fragmentary.⁷² Such endeavors were highly controversial. State funding for improvements was decidedly limited and often ill-used. Additionally, many politicians, landowners, and merchants believed that public monies should be applied elsewhere, such as with overland projects related to turnpikes, plank roads (cut logs laid laterally to form a solid pathway), or rail lines. Low-lying swamplands often prevented the construction of roads in the three-county area, and over time, even those long opposed to internal improvements in North Carolina began to see the need for navigational development along the Tar-Pamlico River corridor.

In December 1852, with the *Amidas* focused on mail service and no longer consistently calling at Tarboro, county merchants were forced to seek alternative means of shipping and receiving merchandise. Overland passage to Hamilton on the Roanoke River was considered, however, shipping delays combined with increased costs

⁷⁰ Lawrence, 73.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

⁷² Watson, "North Carolina and Internal Improvements, 70.

prohibited the idea. The construction of a plank road to Washington was also contemplated, but in the end never came to pass. Edgecombe County officials attempted to elicit funds for a railroad line into Tarboro, but this too fell short of expectations. The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad terminal in Rocky Mount (completed in 1840, fifteen miles to the west), would have to suffice until a branch could be completed in 1860 (Figure 19).⁷³ Continuous lobbying for internal improvement funds from the General Assembly drew limited success, but engineering plans for a series of locks and dams on the river were never fully realized. Stage and wagon traffic to Rocky Mount and Wilson (to connect with the railroad), flatboats to Greenville, and the occasional trip by *Amidas* when the river's depth permitted, became the standard methods of shipment from landings above Greenville in the early 1850s.



Figure 19: A locomotive from the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad.⁷⁴

In September 1853, Myers and Son brought the 55-ton, iron hulled steamboat *Governor Morehead* into service, selling the *Amidas* to lumber merchant John Blackwell the following year.⁷⁵ In addition to its upstream duties at Greenville, the *Morehead*

⁷³ Alan D. Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 58.

⁷⁴ Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History*, 58.

⁷⁵ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 43-46,

provided public excursions to supplement its revenue capacity. In 1856, Myers and Son advertised:

Until further notice the Steamer *Governor Morehead* will leave our wharf every Wednesday afternoon at one o'clock, weather permitting, on an excursion down the river returning at six o'clock. Tickets: 25 cents, children: Half price.⁷⁶

Myers and Son essentially operated as a monopoly on the Tar River in the 1850s, yet as the years passed, other steamers began to appear.

The 106-ton steamer *Loper* (also written as *Lopez*) originally operated from Hamilton on the Roanoke River, but by 1860 was providing commercial service from Washington to Norfolk through the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal, which opened in 1859. Owned by a group of Halifax businessmen, the *Loper* competed with the 120-ton side-wheel steamer *Empire*, operating under the flag of the Virginia Steamship Company. In 1855, Havens, Wiswall, and Havens, a Washington-based shipbuilding firm, built the steamboat *Wilson*, which served between Washington and Greenville.⁷⁷ Myers and Son, apparently unsettled by the competition, purchased the vessel outright and sold it to the Norfolk-based firm of Delk & Lindsey. The steamers *Post Boy* and *Pamplico* also saw commercial service out of Washington in the years preceding the Civil War, connecting with outbound ports such as Bath, Germantown, Swan Quarter, Portsmouth, New Bern and Beaufort. Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, most of these vessels were converted, sold, or commandeered to serve the needs of the two opposing forces.

Steam-powered river commerce evolved slowly in antebellum Edgecombe, Pitt, and Beaufort Counties, and by itself, did not dramatically alter the patterns of area

⁷⁶ *North Carolina Times* (Washington) October 6, 1856.

⁷⁷ Litchfield, "Shipping," 230; Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 49-54.

settlement already in place. The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad terminal in Rocky Mount (which proved remarkably beneficial) allowed merchants and residents to utilize another avenue of transportation besides the Tar-Pamlico River.⁷⁸ The construction of the Greenville and Wilson plank road, completed in 1853, not only improved economic circumstances at each terminus, but provided yet another means for Tar-Pamlico residents to access rail lines and outbound points.⁷⁹ The road also encouraged the formation of Marlboro, a small merchant village located along its path just to the south of present-day Farmville.

Despite these technological alternatives, the Tar-Pamlico River remained a vital local transportation corridor. Production increases related to naval stores and a booming cotton market – Edgecombe County led state cotton production by a wide margin in 1859 – in combination with slave labor and conventional maritime transportation directed landing usage (both public and private) and drove local economies. Population along the river continued to generally progress upward with a few notable exceptions. In the 1830's, economic stagnation and increased poverty caused many Tar-Pamlico residents to emigrate while searching for a means of support, and in the 1850s, even in the midst of an economic boon, hundreds of Edgecombe County citizens migrated into the newly formed Western territories of the expanding United States. Census figures from the three-county region also confirm that local slave rates continued to outpace those of free citizens.⁸⁰ By the Census of 1860 (the last tally before emancipation) slaves

⁷⁸ Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History*, 58.

⁷⁹ King, 113-114.

⁸⁰ Roger Kammerer and Candace Pearce, *Greenville* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2001), 7-8.

outnumbered free persons by nearly 3 percent.⁸¹ Edgecombe County alone kept over 10,000 laborers in slavery in 1860, outnumbering free residents by over 28 percent, and enabling it to become one of the wealthiest counties in North Carolina.

Commercial maritime transportation was fundamental to the distribution of people and goods along the Tar-Pamlico watershed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, steamboat traffic did not actually begin to reinforce existing settlement trends until the 1850s, by which time, overland technologies and the clouds of war had both begun to emerge. In the decade that followed, North Carolina's entire arrangement of governmental authority, economic development, commercial transportation, and maritime settlement would be dealt a most devastating blow.

Transgressions of War

During the years prior to the American Civil War (1861-1865) – the War for Southern Independence, as it was known in the South – stark disagreements over the legality of slavery and the rights of individual states continued on both national and regional fronts. The growing controversy reached critical stages after the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, and the subsequent secession of South Carolina from the United States in December 1860.⁸² Along the lower Tar-Pamlico River, most plantation owners argued in support of North Carolina's own secession proposal, while many merchants and ship-owners guarded against the loss of commercial interests in the North. A January 1861 edition of the *Tarboro Mercury* declared that “all

⁸¹ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 160-161; UVA, “Historical Census Browser.”

⁸² Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History*, 37-38.

of Edgecombe... have turned their backs upon the present 'Union.'"⁸³ Downstream, many Pitt County residents were fervently divided between the two alternatives, while most of Beaufort County's population remained principally "pro-Union" (some later went so far as to form the Union's 1st North Carolina regiment).⁸⁴ The arguments escalated into more violent behavior after 20 May 1861, when North Carolina officials voted to formally secede from the Union and ally with the Confederate States of America

We, the people of the State of North Carolina in convention assembled, do declare and ordain, that the ordinance adopted by the State of North Carolina in the convention of 1789, whereby the Constitution of the United States was ratified and adopted, and also all acts and parts of acts of the General Assembly ratifying and adopting amendments to the said Constitution, are hereby repealed, rescinded, and abrogated. We do further declare and ordain, that the union now subsisting between the State of North Carolina and the other States, under the title of the United States of America, is hereby dissolved, and that the State of North Carolina is in full possession and exercise of all those rights of sovereignty which belong and appertain to a free and independent State. Done in convention at the city of Raleigh, this the 20th day of May, in the year of our Lord 1861, and in the eighty-fifth year of the independence of said State.⁸⁵

Following the outbreak of hostilities in April 1861, Abraham Lincoln enacted laws in the North making it illegal to conduct trade with Southern states.⁸⁶ In turn, the Confederacy ceased shipments of raw materials to the North, and pursued avenues of trade in Europe, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean. Countless incidents of unauthorized traffic occurred between the two sides, including exchanges of cotton, salt, foodstuffs, and medicine. Legal exchange of goods with the North only took place if

⁸³ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁴ King, 119; Reed, 175; Richard A. Sauer, "'A Succession of Honorable Victories: The Burnside Expedition in North Carolina'" (Dayton, OH: Morningside House, Inc., 1996), 368.

⁸⁵ Robert N. Scott, ed., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies*, Ser. 4, Vol. 1 (Harrisburg, PA: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1985), 335-336, (henceforth ORA).

⁸⁶ E. Merton Coulter, *The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge, LA: 1950), 286-288; Merriman, 38, 40.

Southern merchants signed loyalty oaths to the Union, which most merchants were reluctant to do.

By summer, a Federal blockade of southern ports was underway and seizures of merchant vessels and blockade runners became commonplace. Almost immediately commercial patterns on the Tar-Pamlico River began to change for the worse. With a nationwide call to arms, confrontation soon replaced the prosperity of corresponding maritime trade. In February and March of 1862, Roanoke Island and New Bern fell to the Union forces of General Ambrose Burnside and Admiral Louis Goldsborough.⁸⁷ This placed Washington (and several other area communities of military significance) in serious jeopardy of being overrun.

In an effort to prevent the opposing force from proceeding inland along the Tar-Pamlico River, Confederate engineers drove three rows of over 900 wooden pilings into the riverbed between Swan and Hill's Points, halting all but the most essential maritime traffic (Figure 20).⁸⁸ Workers removed the upper portions of the obstructions a few feet below the waterline to obscure their positioning, and left a narrow channel clear so Confederate shipping could safely pass. The barrier did not effectively serve the purpose for which it was intended, however. Commercial traffic ceased altogether, and in late March 1862, the Federal gunboat USS *Delaware* steamed upriver past the obstructions

⁸⁷ Sauer, 196-197, 304-307.

⁸⁸ Charles F. Warren, "Washington During the Civil War" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 37-41; Fred Malison, "Fortification of Washington" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 545-546; White, 146.

with a detachment of soldiers from the 24th Massachusetts Infantry onboard, and with hardly a shot, took control of Washington.

Over the course of the next few months, skirmishes between the two opposing sides occurred with increasing regularity. On 5 June, in response to Confederate assaults, a force of 500 Federal troops attacked the 44th North Carolina regiment a few miles west of Washington at Hardison's Mill on Tranters Creek.⁸⁹ Each side suffered numerous casualties, but among the Confederate dead was Colonel G. B. Singeltary, commanding officer of the 44th regiment. The loss forced the Confederates to move northwest into Tarboro, while the Federals returned to Washington and immediately began to fell trees, dig shallow moats, and construct earthen fortifications in order to boost the defensive lines around the town.

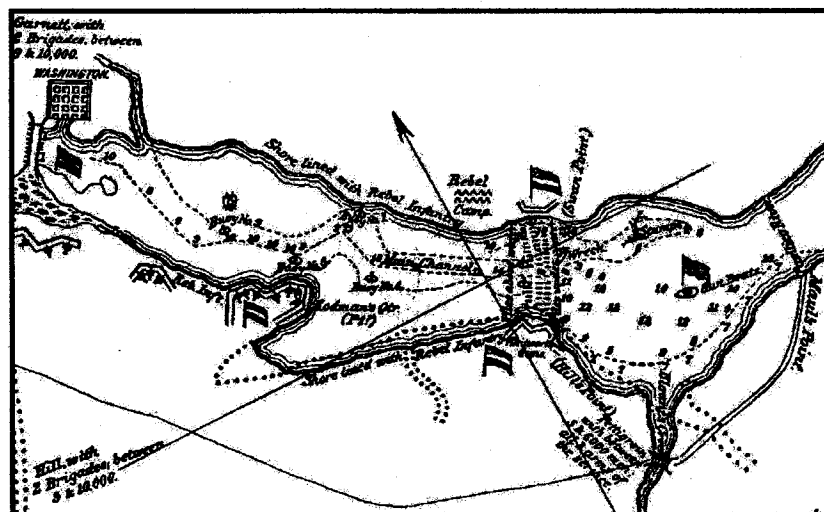


Figure 20: Chart of the Pamlico River showing Confederate positions during the siege of Washington, NC, 1863.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Warren, "Washington During the Civil War," 38.

⁹⁰ Richard Rush, et al., *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), Ser. 1, Vol. 8, 674, (henceforth ORN).

In early September, the two opposing sides battled once again as Confederate troops attacked and breached Washington's outer perimeter, capturing a number of Union gun emplacements. The assault was ultimately turned back after several hours of brutal fighting and a series of artillery bombardments from the Union gunboats USS *Louisiana* and USS *Pickett*, positioned off Washington's waterfront. *Louisiana* offered considerable supporting fire even in the midst of a disastrous explosion onboard *Pickett*. As the battle raged, *Pickett's* ordinance magazine erupted in flames, causing the gunboat to sink with the loss of nearly twenty hands. After the battle, Union troops salvaged the vessel's functional guns, and the following June, with Washington still in their control, raised the engines and boilers with the wrecking schooner *Mary Francis*.⁹¹ After the war, salvagers removed most of *Pickett's* fittings and worthwhile metals, yet, even today, sections of the hull can be found submerged west of the Rt. 17 Bridge, just south of the river's navigational channel.⁹²

A month after *Pickett's* destruction, Union forces advanced upriver from Washington in an attempt to take Greenville and destroy any Confederate vessels located at Tarboro.⁹³ To lead the inland raid, Federals troops outfitted the 118-ton steamboat *North State* (recently seized at New Bern) with a 24-pound howitzer and a detachment of Marines to serve the gun. According to a report filed by Lieutenant R. T. Renshaw and Engineer, J. L. Lay, the *North State*, along with a small launch and flatboat, arrived at

⁹¹ Bridgers Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 80.

⁹² North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch, "Site File: *Pickett*, #0002TRR" (Kure Beach: North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, 2003).

⁹³ King, 132.

Greenville on the morning of 9 October.⁹⁴ An advance force quickly took control of Greenville's bridge, as another detachment landed to secure the town center. The mayor quickly and astutely surrendered to the force, as Union troops seized official buildings and began taking prisoners. Renshaw's men then appropriated food, supplies, horses, and mules, burned the bridge, and made a hasty departure.

The route upriver was impassable due to low water levels, eliminating the possibility of advancing on Tarboro, so the Union force set a return course downstream. Along the way, the *North State* snagged upon a sandbar, which detained it for several hours. Late that evening, the flotilla arrived at Yankee Hall (renamed Dixie Hall by area residents at the start of war), and then proceeded to Washington the following day.⁹⁵ Despite the fact that Confederate forces occupied much of the surrounding countryside, they could not protect the local town centers without first gaining control of the river. The shallow Tar River corridor, combined with superior naval strength (local Confederates possessed no gunboats or ironclads), was critical to the successes of the Union force. On this particular occasion, Tarboro was spared an attack due merely to the protection of low water.

In late March 1863, under orders from Confederate Major General James Longstreet to reacquire bases of supply in eastern North Carolina, a force commanded by Major General Daniel H. Hill laid siege to Washington with nearly 9,000 men.⁹⁶ Federal troops occupying the town needed to be re-provisioned via the Tar-Pamlico River,

⁹⁴ *ORN*, Ser. 1, Vol. 8, 205.

⁹⁵ Shortly after the Greenville mission, the *North State* returned to New Bern only to be heavily damaged in an armed inland expedition along the Neuse River.

⁹⁶ Warren, 41-43; Mallison, 547.

therefore any vessel attempting to run the siege (usually by the darkness of night) faced enemy fire from Brigadier General J. J. Pettigrew's reinforced batteries located along both sides of the river. As ammunition and supplies began to shrink, the Federals ran the steamer *Escort*, loaded with stores and soldiers from the 5th Rhode Island regiment, through the Confederate gauntlet at dawn on 15 April. Artillery batteries struck the vessel with approximately forty individual rounds, but the steamer still managed to successfully land at Washington and reinforce the troops located within the town's protective barricades (Figure 21). According to long-time residents Blount Rumley, Jr. and his father Blount Rumley, Sr., many local inhabitants (including themselves) have found unexploded artillery shells overshot into fields along both sides of the river.⁹⁷

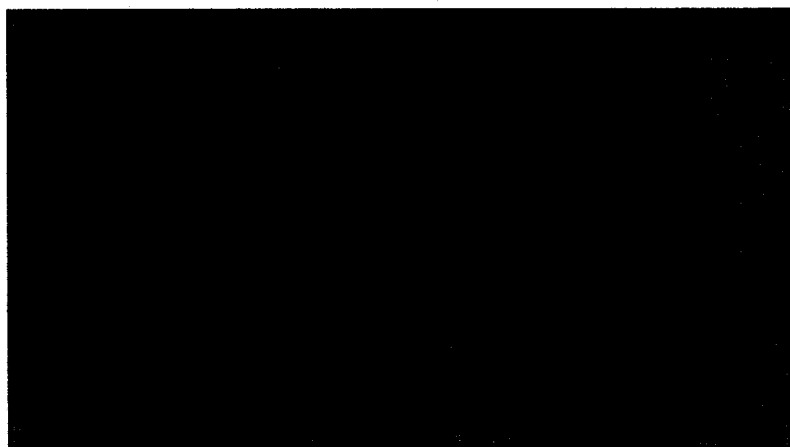


Figure 21: The Union steamer *Escort* running past Confederate batteries and obstructions on the Pamlico River, east of Washington, NC.⁹⁸

Pettigrew's emplacements merged into the lines of Brigadier General Junius Daniel's brigade, and together stretched along the river from Blount's Creek west to Chocowinity, effectively cutting off any overland Union offensive originating out of New

⁹⁷Blount Rumley, Jr., personal interview by author, November 12, 2004; Blount Rumley, Sr., personal interview by author, November 12, 2004.

⁹⁸*Harpers Weekly*, May 9, 1863, 301.

Bern. During the siege, a battery positioned directly across the river from Washington repeatedly assaulted Federal supply vessels attempting to replenish the gunboats *Louisiana*, *Commodore Hull*, *Eagle*, and *Ceres*, guarding the town's waterfront.⁹⁹

General Ambrose P. Hill later praised Daniel's men for their spirited accomplishment: "With some half a dozen field pieces you kept back nine gunboats from coming to the relief of [the Yankee's] afflicted consorts."¹⁰⁰ Despite the considerable effort, Confederate troops could not seize ultimate control of the river and displace the Federals from Washington. Pettigrew and Daniel's brigades were eventually reassigned into General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, while Union troops staged inland raids out of Washington, New Bern, and Plymouth for another full year.

A Federal force under Brigadier General Edward E. Potter rode from New Bern into Greenville on 19 July 1863, reporting that the town was "completely surrounded with strong lines of entrenchments, but there were no troops, excepting for a few convalescents and sick in the hospital."¹⁰¹ Potter's troops seized the courthouse, post office, and jail, plundered homes and businesses, and released twenty-five black men, imprisoned for attempting to reach New Bern and join a Union colored regiment. The troops moved northwest from Greenville along the Tar River Road through Falkland and Sparta, encountering little resistance. Union soldiers looted homes and farms as they passed, and following a night encampment near the Pitt / Edgecombe County line, a

⁹⁹ Daniel H. Hill, Jr., *Confederate Military History*, Vol. 4. (Atlanta, GA: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 307.

¹⁰⁰ *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, 1893-1932, Vol. 24, rep. (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1987), 118.

¹⁰¹ David A. Norris, "'The Yankees Have Been Here!': The Story of Brig. Gen. Edward E. Potter's Raid on Greenville, Tarboro, and Rocky Mount, July 19-23, 1863," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 73, no. 1 (1996): 6-7.

detachment of cavalry rode into Rocky Mount, capturing a Confederate train carrying soldiers and supplies. Potter's men set fire to the train, destroyed the station, and pulled up nearby railroad track. In addition, they destroyed several Confederate wagons filled with provisions, ransacked stores, and burned local warehouses filled with cotton and cloth.

Meanwhile, another Union detachment, led by Major Floyd Clarkson, set its sights on Tarboro, blazing a path of destruction through outlying plantations and into the town itself. Under enemy fire from Confederate positions nearby, men from Clarkson's 12th New York Cavalry captured the steamboats *Colonel Hill* (formerly *Oregon*, re-named in honor of Major General Daniel H. Hill) and *Governor Morehead*, the only two steamers left on the upper reaches of the river, and set them both afire.¹⁰² Clarkson's official report affirmed:

I had detailed two squads to take possession of two steamboats just below the bridge. One under the command of Lieut. William Banta, Jr., acting quartermaster of the detachment, boarded the *Colonel Hill*, and burned it. The other, under the command of Capt. Emory Cummings, took possession of the *Governor Morehead*, and burned it.¹⁰³

Soldiers crossed the river and also set alight the wooden framing of a partially built ironclad gunboat similar in design to the CSS *Albemarle*, then under construction on the Roanoke River. In a statement to Acting Rear-Admiral S. Phillips Lee, Tarboro grist-miller Michael Cohen reported:

¹⁰² Ibid., 11; ORA, Ser. 1, Vol. 27 (2), 973; Matthew S. Lawrence wrote the most comprehensive study on the *Oregon/Colonel Hill* in his 2003 East Carolina University master's thesis, "Fair Specimen of a Southern River Steamer, The *Oregon* and Tar/Pamlico River Steam Navigation." Information can also be found at the Kure Beach office of the North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch in site file: "*Oregon*, #0004TRR."

¹⁰³ ORA, Ser. 1, Vol. 27 (2), 973.

The work on the gunboat at Tarborough was begun in September last, continued one month, then stopped (in order to work on the iron-clads at Wilmington and afterward on the Roanoke), and was renewed only two weeks before General Potter destroyed it (July 20): at which time, about 20 feet of its amid-ships section had been put up in six parts of the frame of bottom, four parts making sides and angles and tops. More of the frame, in sections, was ready to be put up. General Potter destroyed this, and two unarmed rover steamboats. One (of iron, stern-wheel, drawing 20 inches, fast, and in good order) called *Governor Morehead*, owned by Myers, who took the lights from the house at Hatteras Inlet when war broke out. The other, called *General [Colonel] Hill* (old, slow, and stern-wheel, drawing 6 feet), and owned by Willard. There was then a high flood in the river.¹⁰⁴

Following the destruction of the Tarboro vessels, Clarkson's marauders repositioned themselves back downstream.

When the enemy, having brought up a piece of ordnance, opened fire upon us, while we were upon the north side of the Tar River, we were ordered to moved across the bridge, through the town, and out upon the same road to Sparta by which we had entered. This we did in the same order as when we advanced.¹⁰⁵

As they moved south, another detachment of General Potter's men took their place and burned two government warehouses, numerous stores, and several private establishments, while plundering the bank and local Masonic lodge.¹⁰⁶ Confederate reinforcements turned back several Union incursions to the north and east, ultimately forcing the Federals to reassemble their dispersed forces and move south, but not before freeing slaves, seizing horses and provisions, and burning the Tarboro bridge. Skirmishes continued throughout the next two days as a Union rear guard covered Potter's withdraw, allowing the force to arrive at New Bern on 23 July (Figure 22).

¹⁰⁴ ORA, Ser. 1, Vol. 29 (2), 71.

¹⁰⁵ ORA, Ser. 1, Vol. 27 (2), 973.

¹⁰⁶ Norris, 12-17.

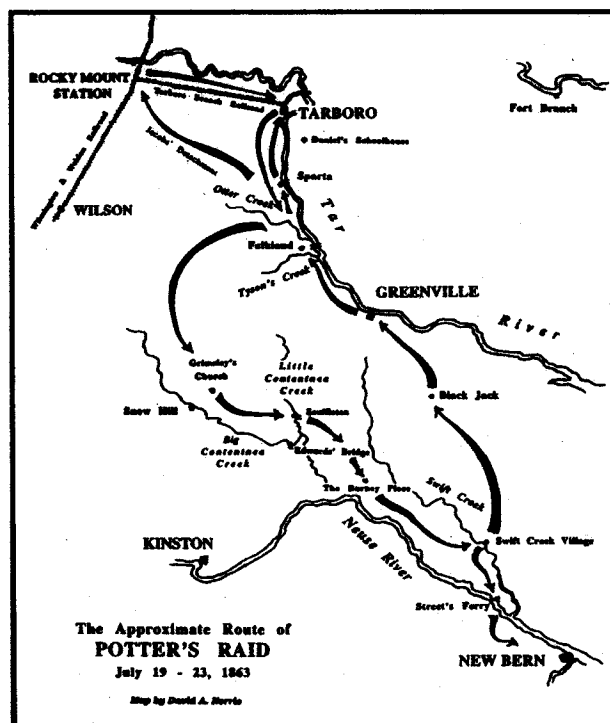


Figure 22: The route of Union General Edward E. Potter's raiding party, July 1863.¹⁰⁷

From a Union perspective, the raid was extremely successful. Casualties remained relatively low (six dead, sixty-nine wounded or captured) with enormous damage inflicted upon Confederate provisions, equipment, and transport infrastructure.¹⁰⁸ Several town centers and plantations along the Tar River lie in ashes. The destruction of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad bridge in Rocky Mount cut Confederate lines of supply, and the burning of government buildings and records disrupted all levels of local authority. The loss of vital supplies, equipment, wagons, mules, and horses set the Confederate military back months. Potter's men took over one hundred prisoners and freed hundreds of slaves. Moreover, the destruction of the Tarboro ironclad and the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., v.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 25.

steamboats *Colonel Hill* and *Governor Morehead* removed any chance of activating a Confederate naval force of any significance from the Tar-Pamlico River. Years of commercial development and months of military organization were erased in just a few destructive days.

Downstream in Washington, the devastation continued the following spring. Immediately after the Confederate's recaptured Plymouth, a port town on the Roanoke River just north of the Tar-Pamlico watershed, Union Brigadier General Edward Harland was ordered to withdraw from Washington. On 30 April 1864, as the Federals departed, and with Southern troops moving south to intercept, Union soldiers ransacked local homes, stores, warehouses, and wharves, and set the town ablaze in an effort to deprive the Confederacy of any supply reserves or logistical advantages. According to North Carolina politician Charles F. Warren (writing in 1898),

The fire broke out at 10 o'clock in the morning of April 30th, as the last Federal troops were embarking. It burned from the river through to the northern limits of the town, extending from Van Norden nearly to Respass Streets, and spreading both to the east and west as the flames advanced. The bridge was fired and destroyed and the fire extended to that portion of the town... After this baptism of fire the town was desolate and ruined. There were scarcely five hundred inhabitants remaining of what had been an enterprising and prosperous town of thirty-five hundred three years before... The entire colored population departed at the evacuation. The streets were deserted and the stores and most of the private residences were unoccupied. No work or business of any kind went on in the town... For many years the chimneys stood to mark the path of the conflagration, and, even now, after the lapse of a third of a century, the waste places have not all been built up. No town gave more freely of its men and means, and no town suffered more for the cause of the Confederacy.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Warren, "Washington During the Civil War," 44-45.

Conclusion

The years 1790 through 1865 presented the United States with recurrent cycles of dynamic change. The newly independent nation emerged with an innovative form of government, crossed swords with a former enemy and won, embraced advanced transportation technologies that united it still further, and then turned upon itself with an astonishing domestic brutality. For residents of the Tar-Pamlico watershed, it was much the same. An inexperienced governmental progression presided over a growing population base, with each side struggling through the adjustments of emerging technologies and moral contradictions.

Prior to the Civil War, local settlement patterns relied heavily upon a combination of migration, riverfront geography, agricultural production, and commercial maritime transportation. Between 1790 and 1860, the population of free citizens increased by nearly 42 percent, while the number of slaves in the three-county region more than tripled (241.9 %).¹¹⁰ The exact figures fluctuated in response to the expanding United States, agricultural market shares, economic circumstances, and the conflicts of war. Yet, throughout the period, the one constant that remained was an acute dependency on maritime transportation. Until the introduction of rail lines (not implemented locally until 1860) nearly every facet of regional commerce was somehow related to the simple principle of waterborne distribution, with population centers and improvements to infrastructure being driven by access to area river landings.

¹¹⁰ UVA, "Historical Census Browser."

Steam technology increased economies of scale by raising production and reducing costs through improved operational efficiency and speed. Nevertheless, steamboats were slow to replace the traditional methods of local river-borne shipment due to a state-wide reluctance for change and the Tar-Pamlico River's predominance for irregular water levels. By the time residents established steam-power as a practical method for moving goods and passengers along the river (and possibly affecting settlement), overland technologies and the preludes to civil war had begun to take shape. It was not until Reconstruction that steam-power vessels influenced local settlement patterns to any significant degree.

The devastation inflicted during the Civil War years immobilized all commercial development along the Tar-Pamlico, and forever altered traditional Southern economies. Every town center, supporting community, and plantation on the river was dealt a most tremendous blow. Greenville, Tarboro, Rocky Mount, and especially Washington would take years to fully recover. The war scattered populations, caused the dissolution of local governments, laid waste to systems of transportation, communication, and commerce, and eliminated nearly all the maritime success begun generations earlier. Revitalization could only begin with incremental social and economic adjustments, combined with the proven maritime methodologies previously practiced on the Tar-Pamlico River.

CHAPTER FOUR

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIALISTS

Reconstruction

In 1865, amid the destruction of the Civil War lay the shattered remnants of Tar-Pamlico River maritime commerce. Blockades, sieges, restrictions, and raids conspired to sever nearly all waterborne trade to and from the region in the first half of the decade. Moreover, many areas underwent both quantitative and categorical shifts in population. Greenville, the only incorporated town in Pitt County at the time, lost nearly 38 percent of its populace between 1860 and 1870, and the Union victory ensured that Emancipation would remove the official stipulation between free and slave populations.¹ The war left countless numbers of soldiers, citizens, and former slaves dead, wounded, or missing, devastating the state's agricultural economy and maritime character. The bitter struggle left most area farms and businesses bankrupt, and much of the maritime infrastructure in ruins. The once dominate naval stores industry was virtually non-existent as pre-war production rates disintegrated and Northern ports replaced transport centers in the South.² It was not until after the bloodshed ended and the Federal government eased trade restrictions that regional markets in North Carolina began the process of regeneration.

Traffic on the river was sporadic in the months following the war's end. Nearly all Tar-Pamlico vessels in service prior to the conflict were converted for wartime use, scuttled, sold at a fraction of their value, or destroyed. The steamer *Raleigh* (formerly

¹ Henry T. King, *Sketches of Pitt County: A Brief History of the County, 1704-1910*, rep. (Greenville, NC: Era Press, 1976), 179-180.

² Percival Perry, "The Naval Stores Industry in the Old South, 1790-1860," *The Journal of Southern History* 34, no. 4 (1968): 525.

Loper) was part of North Carolina's defense force (the Mosquito Fleet), which General Ambrose Burnside's Union force destroyed in 1862.³ Confederates are thought to have taken the *Amidas*, yet the vessel's ultimate disposition is unknown.⁴ The Federals captured the steamer *Wilson* and used it during the Washington campaign, after which it disappeared from official records.⁵ Union forces destroyed the steamers *Colonel Hill* (formerly *Oregon*) and *Governor Morehead* in Tarboro in 1863.⁶ *Post Boy* remained privately owned early in the war, serving North Carolina's cause under contract as a troop transport.⁷ Like many Civil War vessels, *Post Boy's* whereabouts after the conflict remain a mystery. One vessel that survived the war was *Cotton Plant*. The steamer served the Confederacy well on Albemarle Sound and the Roanoke River, and then returned to commercial duty on the Tar-Pamlico in December 1866, shipping goods between Tarboro and Washington (under multiple owners) until 1881 when a cargo fire (of mostly cotton bales) destroyed the vessel as it lay at Tarboro landing.⁸ Captain W. B. Myers towed the burnt-out hulk downriver to Washington, where salvors removed much of its machinery, and left to rest to decay in the mud alongside Castle Island.⁹

³ Matthew S. Lawrence, "A Fair Specimen of a Southern River Steamer," *The Oregon and Tar/Pamlico River Steam Navigation* (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 2003), 105-106, 112.

⁴ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center Manuscript, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, 1979), 42-43.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶ Robert N. Scott, ed., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies*, Ser. 1, Vol. 27 (2) (Harrisburg, PA: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1985), 973.

⁷ Lawrence, 108, 122.

⁸ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 104.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 111; *Southerner* (Tarboro, NC), March 3, 1881; It does not appear that *Cotton Plant's* documented hull type or dimensions conform to any vessel remains found during recent archaeological surveys near Castle Island. See the ECU's 2006 publication *The Castle Island Ship's Graveyard: The History and Archaeology of Eleven Wrecked and Abandoned Watercraft* by professors Bradley Rodgers and Nathan Richards.

Shipbuilding on the Tar-Pamlico during the war was extremely limited and very nearly absent completely. Washington's Farrow and Ritch shipyard built, but did not fully rig, one wooden schooner. In May 1862, Federals seized the unfinished vessel and completed it with labor from USS *Louisiana*.¹⁰ Naval officials then christened the newly fitted-out ordnance hulk as USS *Renshaw* in honor of *Louisiana*'s captain Richard T. Renshaw and the late Commodore William B. Renshaw. Shortly after, the vessel became part of the United States Navy's North American Blockading Squadron. Following the war, USS *Renshaw* was sold out-of-service at Norfolk in 1865.¹¹ In addition to the *Renshaw*, Farrow and Ritch also laid the keel for another potential naval vessel, as did John Myers, but occupying Union forces destroyed both hulls before they were completed. The census of 1870 lists Joseph Farrow's shipyard as the only shipbuilding operation in Washington, however, a few years later, John Myers' sons reorganized the family shipyard business after the death of their father. During Reconstruction there was very little working capital available, so local shipwrights were unable to build any vessels of significant size or consequence, and only one ultimately powered by steam (Table 7).

Tar-Pamlico River traffic and shipbuilding were both obviously contingent upon a clear lane of maritime travel. Navigational surveys initiated by the Federal Government and conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1872 and 1875 found plentiful shoals and tree snags, but more importantly, identified the unseen threat of the nearly 900

¹⁰ William N. Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," in *Of Tar Heel Towns, Shipbuilders, Reconstructionists and Alliancemen: Papers in North Carolina History*, ed. Joseph F. Steelman et al. (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Publications, 1981), 37-38.

¹¹ James L. Mooney, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. 6 (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, Naval History Division, 1976), 74.

wooden pilings driven into the riverbed by the Confederacy.¹² Following approval of \$15,000 for improvements, and a contractual bidding process, the Washington firm of Swindell and Sparrow removed 895 of the pilings. In addition, the G. H. Ferris company of Baltimore, Maryland began to dredge sand, mud, and logs (some of which needed to be removed with explosives) from a designated channel approaching Washington that measured 175 feet wide by 9 feet deep at its largest point.

Table 7: Chronological List of Recorded Vessels Constructed near Washington, NC, 1861-1877 (L=Length, B=Beam, D=Depth, in feet).¹³

Name	Type	Year	Tons	L	B	D	Comments
<i>Renshaw</i>	Schooner	1862	75	68	20	5	Captured and completed by Union forces in 1862
<i>Pine of Wilmington</i>	Schooner	1865	30	49	16	4	
<i>Alice Dudley</i>	Schooner	1867	23	55	16	4	
<i>A.J. Marine</i>	Schooner	1873	35	61	18	5	#160134
<i>R.L. Myers</i>	Schooner	1873	44				
<i>T.H.B. Myers</i>	Sloop	1873	9				#24971
<i>Carolina</i>	Schooner	1874		101	24	9	Bath-built; #125280
<i>Pitt</i>	Steamboat	1874	31	80	14	2	Paddle-wheel; Built for the Old Dominion Steamship Company
<i>Somerset</i>	Schooner	1875	29	63	24	4	#115584
<i>J.T. May Queen</i>	Schooner	1877	14				

In 1879, as maritime commerce improved, and with additional government funding, the Corps of Engineers dredged a twenty-six mile stretch of riverbed between Taft's Landing and Old Sparta.¹⁴ In nearly three months of concentrated effort, they eliminated over 2500 snags, removed hundreds of tree stumps and sunken logs, and trimmed back or cut down multiple overhanging trees. The War Department also

¹² James M. Cox, "The Pamlico-Tar River and its Role in the Development of Eastern North Carolina," (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 1989), 67-69.

¹³ William N. Still and Richard A. Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database" (Manuscript, Private Collection of William N. Still, 2006).

¹⁴ Cox, 71.

released the recommendation calling to remove the remains of the *Colonel Hill* (formerly *Oregon*) from below Tarboro. Official records state:

The first wreck met with coming down the Tar River from Tarboro is that of the steamer *Oregon*, about a mile below the town. Recommendations: Removal of *Oregon* at a cost of \$500.¹⁵

The following year the Tarboro *Southerner* reported:

Capt. W. H. James, of the United States Engineering Corps, and his force, are now removing obstructions from the river just below town. They have succeeded in raising the boiler of an old steamer sunk during the war, which has heretofore been a dread to navigation.¹⁶

Work continued over the course of the next several years, with steam-dredging, the removal of more snags, and construction of multiple riverside jetties (a narrow series of twin pilings filled with brush and dredge material and covered with planks) on established landings between Grimesland and Tarboro.¹⁷ By 1885, the Corp of Engineers along with private contractors had made nearly \$50,000 worth of improvements to the river's navigational quality and infrastructure as a reaction to dramatic increases in commercial river transportation. In the late 1880s, annual shipping on the Tar-Pamlico River had an estimated value of over \$2 million, equaling an approximate \$32.00 return for every dollar spent on improvements.¹⁸

Collateral Tar River Communities

History often illustrates that those who control access to worthwhile and manageable tracts of land typically manage the local social and political orders. From the

¹⁵ United States Congress, *Report of the Secretary of War*, Volume II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1879), 702-703.

¹⁶ Tarboro *Southerner* report as quoted in *The Morning Star*, Wilmington, NC, December 7, 1880.

¹⁷ Cox, 73-75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

earliest colonial settlers, large landowners regularly directed the labor force and became the most prosperous regional inhabitants. In the antebellum South, plantation owners controlled sizeable areas of land suitable for farming and commerce, which yielded not only crops, but an unbalanced distribution of power. Workers in the field shared little decisive authority or influence upon themselves or their surroundings, with slaves possessing no control whatsoever and often forced into grueling struggles for survival. The Census of 1860 indicates that 2,047 slaveholders held 24,459 slaves in the three-county Tar-Pamlico region, a ratio of 11.9:1.¹⁹ In Beaufort County, 558 slaveholders owned 5,878 slaves (10.5:1), with Pitt County's numbers equaling 817 to 8,473 (10.4:1). The highest regional count was recorded in Edgecombe County at 672 to 10,108, a slaveholder/slave ratio of over 15:1. In this place and time, masses of underprivileged laborers supported the general wellbeing of the upper class, a not altogether uncommon human condition.

Antebellum farms in North Carolina were generally smaller in scale than elsewhere in the South. Immediately before the Civil War, the state contained nearly 69,000 farms, but only 300 of them encompassed 1,000 acres or more (Beaufort County had one, and Pitt and Edgecombe Counties, five each).²⁰ Most farms (70 percent) were less than 100 acres in size, and statewide, farmers outnumbered planters by over 700 to 1. Still, the influence of plantation owners on market share, pricing, legislation, and land use was enormous. For the most part, plantations were self-sufficient entities, producing

¹⁹ The University of Virginia Library, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Historical Census Browser," <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/> (Henceforth: UVA, "Historical Census Browser").

²⁰ J. Paul Lilly, "North Carolina Agricultural History" North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services <http://www.ncagr.com/STATS/history/history.htm>.

everything needed to subsist and prosper. In addition to harvesting crops, most planters also raised free-range livestock, possessed blacksmith, cooper, and carpentry shops, and often maintained cotton gins, gristmills, and riverboat landings to transport their goods to market.²¹ The Civil War changed the distribution of labor in the South, yet its agriculturally based economy survived. After the conflict, large landowners began to use systems of tenant farming and sharecropping, utilizing the labor forces of both black and white residents.²² Farms with less acreage continued to be run by surviving family members, and despite difficult economic conditions, Edgecombe County alone managed to generate over 18,000 bales of cotton in 1869.²³

The end of the war also presented a significant demographic shift along on the Tar-Pamlico. A substantial number of freed slaves, most illiterate, destitute, and reluctant to return to plantation life or move west, sought protection from discriminatory aggression within a large concentration of Federal troops stationed in and around Tarboro.²⁴ In an effort to accommodate these refugees, soldiers established a military safety zone in an area of low, swampy ground on the southern shore of the river along Sparta Road owned by local farmers John Lloyd and Lafayette Dancy. The newly liberated population of Freedmen named their upstart community across from Tarboro "Freedom Hill" (sometimes also referring to it as Liberty Hill), and began to put down roots. Reverend Horace Jones, head of the newly formed Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen,

²¹ John G. Duncan, *Pitt County Potpourri* (Greenville, NC: East Carolina College, 1966), 5.

²² Scott Power, ed., *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina* (Pitt County, NC: The Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1991), 107.

²³ J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina*, rep. (Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc. 1979), 336.

²⁴ Joe A. Mobley, "In the Shadow of White Society: Princeville: A Black Town in North Carolina, 1865-1915," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (1986): 341.

and Abandoned Lands (commonly referred to as the Freedman's Bureau), summed up the sentiment of the new settlers:

To be absolute owners of the soil, to be allowed to build upon their own lands cabins, however humble, in which they should enjoy the sacred privileges of a home, was more than they had ever dared to pray for. It was affecting to hear the old men and women declare how fervently they blessed the Lord, that their eyes were permitted to see this unexpected sight. The woods now began to ring with blows from the woodman's axe, and to gleam at night with the fires which consumed the refuse vegetation, swept off in clearing the forests.²⁵

Under the watchful eye of the now minority white citizenry, residents of Freedom Hill established a provisional town government, and eventually, a church, school, and series of merchant shops. Violence was no stranger to the area as traditional southern whites and freed blacks often battled over the growing community and its associated significance. Physical violence was rampant, overshadowing hateful attitudes on both sides that touched every aspect of local society. The malevolent, often lawless struggle continued for years as the controversial African American community slowly developed. As overt aggression lessened, however, North Carolina officials eventually incorporated the town as Princeville in 1885. Named in honor of Freedom Hill resident and carpenter Turner Prince (1843-1912), the town became the first community in the United States to be wholly settled by independent African Americans.²⁶

Just downstream from Princeville on the river's opposite shore, a reminder of Edgecombe's antebellum plantation past still remains in the form of a Carolina low-county home built for the Sugg family sometime prior to 1820 (members of the Knight

²⁵ Horace James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina, 1864* (Boston: W. F. Brown and Co., 1865), 21.

²⁶ Mobley, "Princeville," 16; Monika Fleming, *Edgecombe County Along the Tar River* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 75.

family also occupied the home).²⁷ Prominent builder, Peter Evans designed and constructed the house known as “Piney Prospect” (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) close to the primitive colonial settlement of Town Creek (Figure 23). George Sugg originally established the farmstead after obtaining a substantial land grant in 1740, a time of increased local settlement in Edgecombe Precinct.²⁸ Multiple generations of the Sugg family members lived and farmed on lands now encompassing Edgecombe and Pitt Counties. A direct descendent, also named George Suggs served the local agricultural community as a senior officer of the Farm Creek Alliance as late as 1889, and numerous other, more distant Sugg relations remain in the region.²⁹ Many early Edgecombe County plantations focused on the production of tobacco and corn, but subsequently changed their predominant cash crop to cotton as market variables shifted.³⁰ In both cases, the primary road to market was the Tar-Pamlico River corridor.

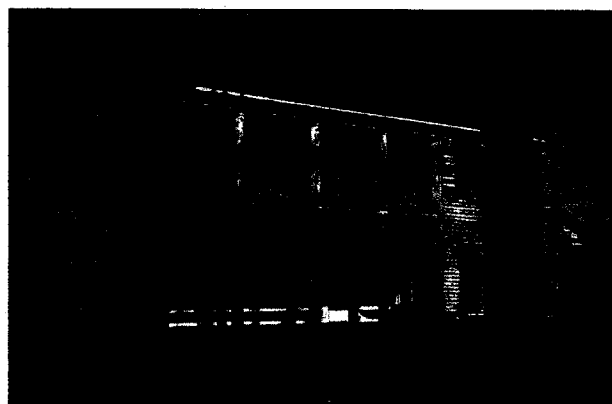


Figure 23: “Piney Prospect,” plantation house near Old Sparta.³¹

²⁷ Alan D. Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 68; Sara V. Jenkins, ed., *The Edgecombe Story* (Tarboro, NC: Edgecombe County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 85.

²⁸ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 292.

³⁰ Franklin C. Erickson, “The Cotton Belt of North Carolina,” *Economic Geography* 20, no. 1 (1944): 5-6.

³¹ Photograph by author, 19 February 2005.

In the 1830s, Town Creek became known as Sparta, and state officials incorporated it in 1876. Twenty-seven years later, in 1903, officials renamed the town "Old" Sparta to remove any confusion with an Alleghany County community of the same name.³² For years, Old Sparta's riverboat landing supported small outlying groups of citizens not living directly on the river, such as those near the community of Crisp.³³ Area residents regularly brought goods to the river in wagons to be shipped downstream, returning home with necessary supplies. At its height, Old Sparta included thirteen stores, three saloons, a cotton gin, and multiple warehouses. In the 1920's, as agricultural shipments shifted from river to rail transport, the community began to decline in importance. Over the years, the town endured multiple Tar River floods, with none more devastating than Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The resulting floodwaters effectively washed Old Sparta from the local maritime environment.³⁴

Another historic structure that survives as a representative of Tar River plantation life is the former home of North Carolina Democratic Governor Elias Carr (1839-1900). Jonas Johnston Carr, Governor Carr's father, built the family's Greek revival plantation home "Bracebridge Hall" in 1826 on the river's western shore near Town Creek.³⁵ The home remains privately owned by Carr family descendants, and is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Figure 24). Governor Carr served North Carolina

³² Joanna Kakissis, "Visitors May Find it Spartan, but Residents Recall a Classic Town," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), August 24, 1998.

³³ Betty B. Reason and Eunice H. Taylor, *The History of Crisp, North Carolina: Crisp Then and Now* (Crisp, NC: Reason, 1999), 27.

³⁴ Jay Barnes, *North Carolina's Hurricane History*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 237.

³⁵ Jenkins, ed., *The Edgecombe Story*, 84.

citizens as their elected leader at the end of the nineteenth century from 1893 to 1897. He was a friend to local farmers, championed quality education for residents, and sought to improve the state's overland road system.³⁶ During the Civil War, he rode as a Confederate cavalry officer, and later served as president of the North Carolina Farmer's Alliance. The 1864 Civil War map of eastern North Carolina by General Robert E. Lee's Chief Engineer, Major General J. F. Gilmer (arguably the best area map at the time) shows a direct route (overland or water is uncertain) leading from the plantation to Carr Landing on the Tar River.³⁷



Figure 24: "Bracebridge Hall" near Old Sparta, NC, the plantation home of Governor Elias Carr.³⁸

Another original Edgecombe County settler who lived nearby was physician James Thigpen, III, (1673-1743).³⁹ Dr. Thigpen first traveled to the confluence of the Tar River and Cheeks Mills Creek (near the present-day Edgecombe and Pitt County line) in

³⁶ Monica Fleming, *Echoes of Edgecombe County, 1860-1940* (Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1996) 85.

³⁷ J. F. Gilmer, *Map of a Part of Eastern North Carolina from a Map in Progress Compiled from Surveys and Reconnaissances Made Under the Direction of Captain A. H. Campbell in Charge, Top. Dep. D.N.V.* (Richmond, VA: Jeremy Francis Gilmer Collection, Virginia Historical Society, 1864).

³⁸ Photograph by author, 19 February 2005.

³⁹ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 18.

January 1722 after a water voyage from Perquimans Precinct on Albemarle Sound.⁴⁰ Accompanying him were his brothers John and Francis, their uncle Henry, three Indian companions, a boatman slave named Eli, and fifteen additional captive laborers brought to clear land and help build cabins. Over the years, Thigpen made multiple trips between the two locations, bringing additional settlers to the Tar-Pamlico region. He accumulated significant amounts of land on the eastern shore of the Tar River, upon which he built riverside wharves, outbuildings, and a plantation house (which took seven years to ultimately complete). In September 1743, on a boat trip across Pamlico Sound, Thigpen's vessel encountered a violent storm which washed son Henry and boatman Eli overboard. Thigpen and longtime Indian companion Travis survived. However, upon arrival at the Tar River plantation, Thigpen developed a severe fever which led to his death days later.

After the demise of James Thigpen, the riverside plantation he founded passed on to his physician son James, IV (1710-1779). In October 1729, the younger Thigpen married Miss Mary Penelope Hill, and upon taking possession of the family property named it "Penny Hill" to honor his wife of fourteen years.⁴¹ In addition to caring for the sick and wounded – Doctor Thigpen invented an innovative surgical instrument used during the Revolutionary War – and running the large plantation, he also operated one of the local area's first gristmills, and transported plantation production on several river boats inherited from his father.

⁴⁰ Alice Whitley Smith, "The Thigpen Tribe" (Tarboro, NC: Edgecombe County Memorial Library Manuscript, 1961), 12-14.

⁴¹ Smith, "The Thigpen Tribe," 15.

When government officials divided the original Edgecombe County into smaller districts, Penny Hill plantation was split between Edgecombe and Pitt Counties, with the Thigpen house falling into the latter area. For many years, descendants of James and Penny worked the lands in the two-county region along the Tar (and elsewhere in South Carolina and Georgia). Thigpen brothers Bartholomew and John (twins), James, V, and Job served the Patriot cause during the American Revolution. Bartholomew and younger brother James survived the war, but John died on a prison ship in Charleston harbor in 1780 after being wounded and captured in a skirmish with Loyalists during the seizure of that vital coastal South Carolina town.⁴²

The community of Penny Hill appears as early as 1808 on the Price-Strother Map of the same year.⁴³ In 1832, a great fire destroyed the original Thigpen home in Pitt County, yet the plantation continued to thrive until the years of the Civil War. By war's end, most Thigpen family members had scattered elsewhere throughout the South. As river commerce reappeared once again during Reconstruction, the former plantation separated into smaller farmsteads, and the community of Penny Hill evolved into an aspiring riverfront terminal. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, steamboats made regular stops at Penny Hill Landing to transport agricultural products and passengers. A 1905 map of Edgecombe County represents Penny Hill with no less than twenty-seven riverside structures.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 18.

⁴³ William P. Cummings, ed., "Price-Strother Map of 1808," In *North Carolina in Maps* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1966), n.p.

⁴⁴ United States Geological Survey, *Map of Edgecombe County, North Carolina Compiled from Maps of the U. S. Geological Survey by Albert Pike and W. N. Brown, Topographers, U.S.G.S.* (Washington D.C.: United States Geological Survey, 1905).

As commercial steamboat transportation declined in the mid-1900s, so too did the community of Penny Hill. The small village was born of Tar River agricultural commerce and transportation, and could no longer survive without its most basic support system. As a consequence, it virtually disappeared from the landscape. Situated just up a small rise from the former river landing, beside a stretch of present-day North Carolina Highway 33, stand the remains of a 15' x 30' Italianate-style architectural structure (Figure 25).⁴⁵ It is the former office of a local country doctor (perhaps a descendant of Dr. Thigpen) built sometime in the late nineteenth century at the height of Penny Hill's social and commercial activity. The solitary building is now uninhabited, and inside are broken windows, cracked plaster, modern trash, and random graffiti. Scrawled on the south facing wall are the words:

"Kathy Griffin West, 5th great granddaughter of James Thigpen and Penny Hill, Jacksonville, NC, 10-11-02."

Whether or not Ms. West is an actual relation of Penny Hill's original founders is the subject of a more detailed genealogical analysis. Nevertheless, the notion of modern-day Thigpen descendants making ancestral pilgrimages to the isolated river site is sociologically intriguing.

Approximately five mile downriver from Penny Hill, is the site of the former Bensboro Plantation.⁴⁶ In the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, watermen slaves at Bensboro Landing loaded flatboats with barrels of naval stores, corn, peas, salt

⁴⁵ Scott Power, ed., *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina* (Pitt County, NC: The Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1991), 116.

⁴⁶ Bruce Cotten, *The Mirrors of Bensboro* (Baltimore, MD: Cylburn, 1925), 3-4.

pork, and tallow for trade throughout the region and beyond.⁴⁷ Owner, Benjamin Atkinson often worked closely with Washington merchant John Gray Blount, utilizing Blount's business expertise and numerous trading vessels to ship commodities to ports as far away as the West Indies. An example of their numerous correspondence remains in a letter from Atkinson to Blount dated 23 May 1791.

Sir, will you please Take a Receipt or Bill of Loading from Captain Deggs for me as he hath not yet got all his cargo. I have concluded to send him to Tobago and Trinidad and then to try the Rest of the Islands, if [the products] do not sell he is to try on, as many as Six Ports on my paying half the port charges, after trying at the second port... Should you hear of any Better markets, direct him as you think best.⁴⁸



Figure 25: Deserted doctor's office at Penny Hill, North Carolina.⁴⁹

The descendants of Benjamin Atkinson operated Bensboro Plantation until the Civil War when the farmstead lost its value as a commercial hub and fell into disrepair. In 1925, former Pitt County resident and Tar River historian Bruce Cotten (1873-1954) wrote:

⁴⁷ Duncan, 23a.

⁴⁸ Alice Barnwell Keith, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers, Vol. 2, 1790-1795* (Raleigh: NC: State Department of Archives and History, 1959), 169.

⁴⁹ Photograph by author, 19 February 2005.

Across the river from Cottendale, our plantation home..., lay the old plantation of Bensboro. It was one of the earliest spots settled on the river and was the seat of the Atkinson family for a hundred and fifty years. As a boy I heard many tales of the past greatness of Bensboro, tales of the gentry and beauty that assembled from far and near, and the magnificence of the entertainments given there. It was a notable home for a hundred years; then came the Civil War and it faded and died like a rose in the desert. As I remember it, the old great house still stood, though much dilapidated and decayed. There were remnants of a box garden in front and rear, and some giant magnolias, here and there, stood reminders of those days when lace stocks bowed to hoop-skirts and the touch of her hand in the old Virginia reel gave a soul joy and thrill lost to us of today. Many broad acres had grown up in pines and brush that hid the long rows of [slave] cabins, now falling and in decay through neglect and the ravages of time. About 1895 the house was burned and today there is not a remnant left of this place which for a hundred and fifty years was a luxurious and exclusive home of the old order of Dixie.⁵⁰

On the opposite shore from Bensboro is the small riverside community of Falkland. In 1727, Robert Williams, Sr. settled in the area after he purchased several thousand acres along the river from the Earl of Granville.⁵¹ Williams' son, Dr. Robert Williams, Jr. (1758-1840), resided near present-day Falkland for most of his eighty-two years. He lived a long and distinguished life, first as Surgeon to the State Regiment during the American Revolution (participating in the 1781 Battle of Guilford Courthouse and others), and later as a member of the North Carolina General Assembly (1786-87, 1791). Additionally, Williams served as a North Carolina state senator for twelve years (1793-95, 1802-08, and 1813-14). He married three times (siring fourteen children), operated a medical practice from his home, attended to his large Tar River plantation, and like fellow political and educational advocate William Blount, was a founding trustee of the Pitt Academy from its original charter in 1786.

⁵⁰ Cotten, *The Mirrors of Bensboro*, 3-4.

⁵¹ King, 219-220.

Falkland, originally known as William's Landing (and also referred to as Pillsboro, Tobacco Patch, and Upper Bluff), developed from an eighteenth century ordinary called "Faulkner House" and the river landing situated near the Williams estate.⁵² The landing not only supported local tobacco and cotton distribution, but also an influx of travelers from across eastern North Carolina arriving for treatment at Dr. Williams' home, which served as a hospital and sanatorium. The momentum generated by influential land owners continued for many years, peaking in the 1850s. Spencer Harriss owned a large plantation west of Cottendale with "several thousand acres of land" and a considerable number of slaves.⁵³ The census of 1850 lists Harriss as a leading Tar-Pamlico slave-owner with 73 captive laborers claimed to be living and working on the plantation. The Harriss family house, built in mid-century, remains to this day adjacent to Falkland near the small present-day village of Bruce.⁵⁴ Falkland appears as early as 1854 on Joseph Hutchins' Map of North Carolina (Figure 26).⁵⁵

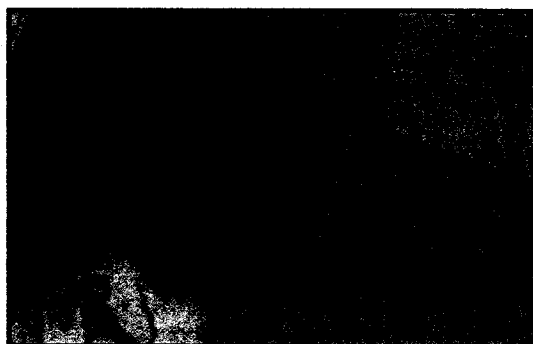


Figure 26: Detail of Joseph Colton's 1854 Map of North Carolina, showing the riverside community of Falkland.⁵⁶

⁵² Bruce Cotten, *As We Were: A Personal Sketch of Family Life* (Baltimore, MD: Privately Printed, 1935), 52; Power, 450.

⁵³ Cotten, *As We Were*, 44.

⁵⁴ Power, 467-488.

⁵⁵ Joseph H. Colton, *North Carolina* (New York: J.H. Colton & Co., 1854).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Following the destruction of the Civil War, Falkland mill owners P.R. Mayo and W.S. Broadus, and merchants M.R. Jones and Randolph Cotten (of Cottendale Plantation) helped stimulate economic recovery by operating mercantile businesses and warehouses on the river.⁵⁷ In 1891, officials incorporated the town of 139 residents, and by 1905 the population jumped to 250. In 1900, over 40 percent of working Falkland residents listed occupations directly associated with farming or timber production, with both industries using the Tar River as their prime avenue of distribution.⁵⁸ Farmers shipped their most marketable produce outbound on passing steamers, while timber merchants floated rafts of cut-logs downstream to waiting sawmills. Commercial river traffic kept the small community growing slowly until 1900, after which, economic difficulties (the country experienced multiple financial "panics" between 1890 and 1910) and an increased use of overland technologies stalled local population growth.⁵⁹ Currently (2000 Census), Falkland's population is slowly rebounding, although it remains the least inhabited community in Pitt County with a population of only 112 town residents.⁶⁰

Other former river landings in the vicinity of Falkland include Ellis (an inspection station in 1784), Foreman (Greenwreath Plantation, c. 1780), Dupree, Reaves, and Center Bluff.⁶¹ Randolph Cotten used Center Bluff Landing as a shipping terminal, and also as a

⁵⁷ King, 196; Power, 452-453.

⁵⁸ The East Carolina University Digital Library, "1900 Census for Pitt County, North Carolina," <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/census/search.aspx>.

⁵⁹ Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Edgecombe County, NC Population Schedule.

⁶⁰ Twenty-second Federal Census of the United States, 2000: Edgecombe County, NC Population Schedule.

⁶¹ Cotten, *As We Were*, 44-46; King, 51-52; Power, 36-37.

location for his mercantile business and warehouse, both of which complemented the adjacent Cottendale Plantation. In 1925, son Bruce Cotten wrote:

Center Bluff was a point of activity in those days when the country was dependant upon the river for transportation. The county maintained a free ferry here for years, and we shipped, I recall, some 13,000 bales of cotton from this point in one season, and the incoming freight – especially fertilizer – was very considerable. With the building of the railroad to Greenville, and afterwards to Farmville, shipping by way of the river ceased and Center Bluff lost its importance as a shipping point. Finally, in 1900, father withdrew his business and my Center Bluff today is one of the dead cities of the Tar.⁶²

Farmers from areas near present-day Farmville used the landing to transfer goods upon the river. Several small stores subsisted on the Center Bluff waterfront until the Civil War years, in conjunction with a local (and occasionally contentious) drinking establishment. The location of Center Bluff Landing is also representative of its name as it splits the distance between Upper Bluff (Falkland) and Lower Bluff, an area also known as Bluebanks, where Confederate engineers began, but did not finish, the construction of an earthworks gun battery during the Civil War. As mentioned above, Center Bluff also served as a ferry crossing. A passage in Jesse Mercer Battle's 1911 autobiography ably described its operation.

While in Edgecombe County, N. C., in April, 1871, I was below Tarboro, near Old Sparta, at a place called Center Bluff on the Tar River. There was a ferry there. It was an old flat bottom scow or lighter. It had a fence on either side and a chain that could be put up at each end. The ferryman had a rope fastened on each shore, running across the river, this rope passing through two pulleys at the ends of the flat boat. He used this rope as a propeller. In addition to this propeller, he used a long pole to help him get from one shore to the other. He would remain on the last shore where he had landed until someone would call him to the other shore. He would go across, jamming his boat as far as possible up the bank of the

⁶² Cotten, *As We Were*, 55.

river.⁶³

The wooden remains of a submerged vessel with powered ferry-like characteristics lie partially imbedded within the western riverbank, just downstream from an abandoned concrete bridge support, near the current Falkland public landing (GPS coordinates: WGS84 18274831E 3952794N).⁶⁴ A brief initial inspection in November 2005 showed two possible wooden engine rails along with three inner longitudinal bulkheads potentially used to support the transverse planking of a shipping deck or ferry platform. The partial remains measured approximately 44' long by 8' wide, and with further analysis, could reveal additional information concerning the river's historical transportation infrastructure.

Approximately twelve miles further downstream, below present-day Greenville, at a former colonial plantation home called Chatham, lived eighteenth century politician, Revolutionary War soldier, and ship-owner John Simpson.⁶⁵ Simpson owned the Beaufort County-built schooner *John and Elizabeth*, and often used it to transport goods to and from the West Indies. On a voyage from the Tar-Pamlico River to Jamaica in 1769, Spanish officials seized the vessel, crew, and cargo in Vera Cruz, Mexico, causing considerable financial loss for the local planter.⁶⁶ During his time on the Tar River (Simpson was born in Massachusetts), he served Pitt County residents as county commissioner, sheriff, riverside tobacco inspector, militia leader, and member of both the North Carolina House and Senate. The small present-day Tar River community of

⁶³ Jesse M. Battle, *Tributes to my Father and Mother and Some Stories of My Life* (St. Louis, MO: Mangan Press, 1911), 120.

⁶⁴ Larry Babits, November 21, 2005, personal email communication.

⁶⁵ King, 223.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

Simpson shares both a portion of the former Chatham plantation site as well as John Simpson's surname.

As a Pitt County administrator, Simpson often conducted business with fellow county officials and neighbors Edward Salter and Dempsey Grimes.⁶⁷ Salter, the county's court clerk, lived approximately halfway between present-day Greenville and Washington on land once owned by Louis Duvall. In 1714, the Lord Proprietors granted the land to Duvall who afterward named it Mount Calvert.⁶⁸ Several years later, Salter purchased most of the property from Duvall's daughter, and became a prominent local planter. In 1752, he established an official tobacco inspection station nearby along the river's commercial corridor (northwest of the present-day span at Grimesland Bridge Road). He also operated a ferry crossing there until the American Revolution, when he accepted a posting in the local militia as Lieutenant Colonel.⁶⁹ Salter's Ferry was an active river crossing and boat landing for many years, operating as a key component along the colonial postal route until Governor William Tyron established a permanent local post office downriver at Bath in 1770.⁷⁰

Salter's downstream neighbor was Pitt County coroner Dempsey Grimes, who owned the riverside plantation of Avon. In 1790, his only son William constructed a Federal-style plantation house on an adjacent farm and called it Grimesland (Figure 27).⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ King, 23; Power, 202.

⁶⁹ King, 223.

⁷⁰ Alan D. Watson, Eva C. Latham, and Patricia Samford, *Bath: The First Town in North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2005), 103.

⁷¹ Power, 33-34, 202.

Grimesland Plantation reached its peak in the 1850s when the demand for cotton caused increases in local plantation output and slave populations.⁷² Several historic structures still exist at the former farmstead, including the original home of William Grimes, slave quarters, a fieldstone spring-house, and a brick rain-cistern. A tree-lined lane often surrounded by fields of cotton stretched from the plantation buildings toward a landing on the Tar River, where vessels carried products to and from outlying markets. An extended row of deteriorated pilings is all that remains of a once working river dock. Archeological evidence in the form of potsherds and bone fragments also confirms that the site was also once occupied by local Native Americans (site #0007TRR).⁷³



Figure 27: Grimesland Plantation House, constructed c. 1790.⁷⁴

The Grimes family passed ownership of the land from one generation to the next through the Civil War years and beyond. Byran Grimes (1828-1880), William Grimes' grandson, gained distinction as a Confederate Major General during the war, serving in the 4th North Carolina Infantry and 2nd Corp of General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia

⁷² Ibid., 95-96.

⁷³ North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch, "Site File: Grimesland Indian Site, #0007TRR" (Kure Beach: North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, 2003).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 34. Bryan Grimes built the side wings on the house in the 1850s.

(Figure 28).⁷⁵ Following the war, General Grimes returned to his home and farm on the Tar River, and continued in the family planting tradition. In August 1880, he was tragically shot to death while riding home along a narrow road in Bear Swamp following a Beaufort County political convention in nearby Washington.⁷⁶ Apparently, the act was a murder-for-hire initiated by two brothers that Grimes sought to remove from Pitt County for objectionable behavior. Outraged residents pursued several potential suspects. However, the trial of alleged murderer William Parker ended in an acquittal the following June.⁷⁷ General Grimes left his wife Charlotte and nine children behind after his death, and is buried in the family cemetery adjacent to the former family home. In 1887, state officials named the small, close-knit community Grimesland in memory of the General, and to honor the history of his family.⁷⁸

Throughout the years, several other community names served the Grimesland area including Gorham, Elksville, Watkins's Ferry, and Nelsonville.⁷⁹ Prior to the establishment of the Grimesland post office in 1886, steamboats delivered the community's mail to Boyd's Ferry landing, located near the present-day Grimesland Bridge. The Boyd family originally owned riverfront land adjacent to Broad Creek and later further upstream near Chicod Creek neighboring Edward Salter's plantation. Former river communities, farms, and landing sites, once actively sustained by

⁷⁵ Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *Extracts of Letters of Major-General Bryan Grimes, to his Wife, Written While in Active Service in the Army of Northern Virginia: Together with Some Personal Recollections of the War, Written by Him After its Close, etc.* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1986), i-ii; More information on the Civil War campaigns of Bryan Grimes can be found in T. Harrell Allen's book *Lee's Last Major General: Bryan Grimes of North Carolina*, published in 1999 by the Savas Publishing Company, Mason City, IA.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, iv; *Southerner* (Tarboro, NC), August 19, 1880.

⁷⁷ *Southerner* (Tarboro, NC), June 20, 1881.

⁷⁸ Power, 201.

⁷⁹ Duncan, 31.

commercial maritime traffic, now lie discreetly unseen along the banks of the quiet river.

Additional sites of record include (from northwest to southeast):

- Parker Landing (near Belvoir Crossroads)
- Gorham's Landing (a colonial landing above present-day Greenville)
- Browns Landing (a former ferry site near Greenville, sometime seen written as Brown's Old Ferry)
- Red Banks (discussed in Chapter 2)
- Barbers Landing (at Barber Creek)
- Cherry Landing (southwest of Rainbow Banks)
- Summit Hill Landing (northeast of Rainbow Banks)
- Tafts Landing (slightly opposite of Summit Hill)
- Yankee Hall (Dixie Hall during the Civil War; discussed in Chapter 2)
- Pactolus (also discussed briefly in Chapter 2)
- Clarkes Landing
- Shingle Landing
- Bear Creek Landing (located on Bear Creek).
- Salt House Landing (located on Tranters Creek).
- Washington Park (immediately east of Washington)
- Cypress Landing (located on Chocowinity Bay)
- Dinah's Landing (located on Goose Creek).⁸⁰



Figure 28: Major General Bryan Grimes (1825-1880), patriarch of Grimesland, North Carolina.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Gilmer, *Map of Eastern North Carolina*; Cotten, *As We Were*, 52-54; Wade G. Dudley, "Phase I Survey: Maritime Sites along the Tar River, 1700-1915" (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Manuscript, 1996), 17-19.

The Peak of Tar-Pamlico River Steam Technology

Naval officer, author, and historian Captain Henry Clark Bridgers, Jr. (1913-1981) spent a generous portion of his life researching historical aspects of the Tar-Pamlico commercial environment, including steamboat transportation, railroad operations, road building, bridge construction, finance, and land management.⁸² His great-uncle Robert Rufus Bridgers (1819-1888) and father Henry Bridgers, Sr. (1876-1951), both prominent Tarboro businessmen and transportation entrepreneurs, spent much of their careers developing these vital areas, obviously influencing the younger Bridgers' enthusiasm for historical research. The two elders perceived affairs of local commerce not solely as individual entities, but rather as supporting pieces of a complex commercial arrangement. They built their perceptions upon the strategies of other like-minded river businessmen, including John Myers and progressive Washington resident Captain Alpheus Whitehurst Styron (Figure 29).

Captain Styron was a multifaceted industrialist, well established in Tar-Pamlico commerce and transportation, who understood the importance of mutual maritime dependence. One of Styron's early vessels was the North Carolina-built steamer *Edgcombe*, which began service between Washington and New Bern in 1877.⁸³ Just three years later, Styron sold the steamer, and its new owners transferred it to the Baltimore market. Following *Edgcombe*, Styron piloted the steamers *Greenville*,

⁸¹ Digital image of a painting by L. Freeman, from a portrait by William Garl Browne, housed in East Carolina University's Joyner Library North Carolina Collection, on loan from the Department of History.

⁸² Henry Clark Bridgers, Jr., Papers (Greenville, NC: Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University).

⁸³ Ysobel D. Litchfield, "Shipping" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 238.

Tarboro (I), *Beta*, and *Aurora* while also managing a bustling Washington shipyard. In addition, Styron owned and operated a lime kiln on Castle Island and a nearby tobacco-packing factory.⁸⁴ In 1890, he was responsible for rebuilding the passenger steamer *Beaufort* into a vessel of nearly 400 tons, one of the largest vessels built in steam-era North Carolina.⁸⁵ In the summer of 1907, his daughter christened the newly Styron-built steamboat *Marjorie* (her namesake) intended for the Washington to Norfolk run.⁸⁶ By that same year, he was operating a gasoline powered boat named *Eagle*.⁸⁷ Styron was an innovator who understood the maritime possibilities of the Tar-Pamlico region, and acted upon them with intense resolve and determination. The careers of men like Myers, Styron, R.R. Bridgers, and Henry Bridgers, Sr. embody the harmonization of effective transportation and agricultural technologies with commercial and community development.

In the decades that followed the Civil War, numerous steamboats operated along the Tar-Pamlico River. Some had a considerable impact on local riverfront communities; others operated within a multi-state area, landing locally at Washington, and a few served Tar-Pamlico residents for only a brief period of time.⁸⁸ The latter two groups contributed to community development as a combined whole, helping to solidify Washington as a maritime commercial hub, yet individual vessels within each group had only moderate

⁸⁴ *Washington Progress* (Washington, NC), December 2, 1890; Edmund H. Harding, "Ships That Pass in the Night" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 507.

⁸⁵ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., "Extracts from Certificates of Enrollment" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, c.1974), n.p.

⁸⁶ *Washington Progress* (North Carolina) August 1, 1907; Litchfield, 240.

⁸⁷ *Washington Progress* (North Carolina) August 18, 1907.

⁸⁸ Bridgers, Jr., "Extracts from Certificates of Enrollment," n.p.

impact by themselves. Steamers serving less than five years on the river included (but were not limited to):

- *Harbinger* (built at Baltimore, VA in 1869)
- *Isis* (built at Norfolk, VA in 1870)
- *Vesta* (built at Norfolk, VA in 1870)
- *North East* (built at Wilmington, NC in 1872)
- *Pitt* (built at Washington, NC in 1874)
- *Edgewcombe* (I) (built at Leachville, NC in 1877)
- *Edgewcombe* (II) (built at Tottenville, NY in 1897)
- *R. L. Myers* (I) (built at Washington, NC in 1879)
- *Tarboro* (I) (built at Washington in 1881)
- *Cleopatra* (built at Colerain, NC in 1884)
- *Dennis Simmons* (built at Wilmington, DE in 1891)
- *May Bell* (built at Grifton, NC in 1892)
- *Carolina* (built at Vanceboro, NC in 1893)
- *Aurora* (built at Washington, NC in 1894)
- *Alma* (I) (built at Washington, NC in 1897)

Steamboats that operated widely along the east coast, but made regular stops at

Washington's waterfront included (but again, were not limited to):

- *George H. Stout* (built at New Brunswick, NJ in 1858)
- *Annie* (built at Wilmington, DE in 1861)
- *Olive* (built at Norfolk, VA in 1869)
- *Tuckahoe* (built at Chester, PA in 1872)
- *Pamlico* (II) (built at Green Point (Long Island), NY in 1874)
- *Defiance* (built at Wilmington, DE in 1875)
- *New Berne* (built at Chester, PA in 1875)
- *Norman L. Wagner* (built at Canajoharie, NY in 1882)
- *Lillie* (built at Canajoharie, NY in 1883)
- *Neuse* (built at Wilmington, DE in 1890)
- *Albemarle* (III) (built at Wilmington, DE in 1891)
- *Hatteras* (built at Eddyville, NY in 1896)
- *Tar River* (built at Washington, NC in 1896)
- *Ocracoke* (built at Tottenville, NY in 1898)

Steam vessels that had a sizeable influence upon Tar-Pamlico inland river communities from Reconstruction to the first quarter of the twentieth century were:

- *Cotton Plant* (built at Philadelphia, PA in 1860; 21 years of service)

- *Greenville* (built at Washington, NC in 1879; 16 years of service)
- *Beaufort* (built at Washington, NC in 1883; 8 years of service)
- *R. L. Myers* (II) (built at Washington, NC in 1885; 23 years of service)
- *Beta* (built at Washington, NC in 1887; 9 years of service)
- *Shiloh* (built at Tarboro, NC in 1895; 30 years of service)
- *Tarboro* (II) (built at Tarboro, NC in 1898; 25 years of service)

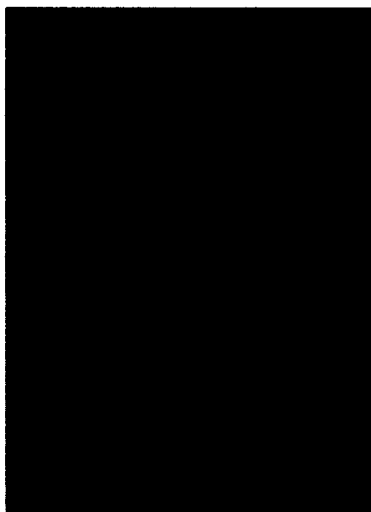


Figure 29: Captain Alpheus Styron,⁸⁹

As previously stated, the iron-hulled *Cotton Plant* was the only Tar River steamer to survive the Civil War intact.⁹⁰ The vessel's reputation of noble wartime service and durability endeared it to area residents, and it was fitting that *Cotton Plant* led the resurgence of commercial traffic on the river. J. J Cherry of Greenville, Richard Bynum, a Falkland resident, John Myers' Sons, the Old Dominion Steamship Company, and other assorted partnerships owned and operated the steamer during its twenty-one year career. In addition to its wartime exploits, *Cotton Plant* survived multiple river floods, gales, and groundings. The vessel was once even raised, refurbished, and returned to service after sinking in 1869 when a submerged snag breached its outer hull plates.

⁸⁹ Henry C. Bridgers Jr. Collection, "Captain Alpheus Styron" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, n.d.).

⁹⁰ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 101, 105.

At the end of the war, *Cotton Plant* and the Washington-Greenville-Tarboro stage line were the only means of commercial transportation between the region's riverside hubs. The two systems worked in conjunction with one another, operating in opposite directions on alternate days, with *Cotton Plant* "touching at all intermediate landings and offering the most certain and speedy mode of conveyance for passengers and freight."⁹¹ As time passed and post-war conditions improved, other steamers ventured out onto the corridor, facilitating connections with larger, deeper draft vessels out of Washington.

The 1870s saw several steamboat owners attempting to gain a foothold on the Tar, but it was not until Captain Styron's *Greenville* arrived in 1879 that another long-term vessel made an inland appearance (Figure 30).

The steamer *Greenville*, the *Edgecombe*'s consort, of the N.C. Line, was launched last Tuesday with a full suit of colors set and amid the blowing of whistles. Miss Lizzie Sparrow, one of Washington's fairest nymphs, wielded the bottle of wine and named her *Greenville* as she glided from the railways into the water... She will make her first trip up the river about Monday next... There are now ten steamers running to or belonging here: *Newbern*, *Pamlico*, *R. L. Myers* [I], and *Pitt* of the Old Dominion Line, and *Defiance*, *G. H. Stout*, *Tuckahoe*, *Greenville*, and *Edgecombe* [I], of the Clyde Line.⁹²

Styron's Tar River Transportation Company (sometimes confused with the Clyde Steamship Company or the Eastern Carolina Dispatch Company) initially specified that *Greenville* measure 69 feet long, but less than a year after its launch, Styron decided to turn the misfortune of an onboard fire into an opportunity by lengthening the hull to 112 feet.⁹³ This increase allowed Styron to add group excursions to *Greenville*'s list of

⁹¹ *Southerner* (Tarboro, NC), December 19, 1867.

⁹² *Southerner* (Tarboro, NC), October 6, 1879.

⁹³ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 138. Confusion sometimes exists as to precise vessel ownership or management, as independent sources often failed to recognize overlap among administrators, crews, and the business dealings of individual companies or their vessels.

numerous commercial offerings. In addition to hauling freight and transporting passengers, the vessel provided outings for organizations such as the Tarboro Colored Methodist Church and Washington's Salamander Fire Company.⁹⁴ *Greenville* ran so many trips that Frank Powell, editor of the Tarboro *Southerner*, in an effort to liven local announcements, often replaced the line "*Greenville* made an excursion" with his own phrase "*Greenville* excurted."⁹⁵ Despite numerous mishaps (including sinking twice and being re-floated), difficult weather conditions, variable water levels, and fluctuations in regional economies, *Greenville* pied the waters of the Tar-Pamlico for fourteen years before the Old Dominion Steamship Company bought the vessel and transferred it to service on the Neuse River.⁹⁶ Records indicate that *Greenville* was "dismantled and abandoned" near New Bern in 1895.⁹⁷

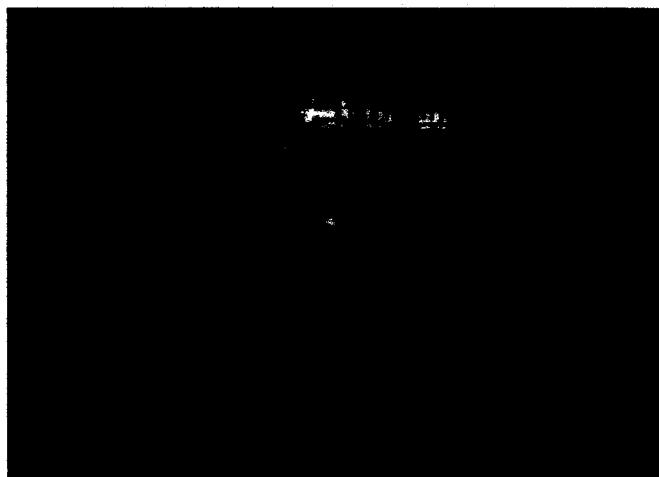


Figure 30: The steamboat *Greenville* on the Tar River (with timber rafts in the foreground).⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Ibid., 142.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 146; *The Weekly Star* (Wilmington, NC), January 2, 1885; April 17, 1891.

⁹⁷ Bridgers, Jr., "Extracts from Certificates of Enrollment," n.p.

⁹⁸ North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch, "Photograph File: Tar River Steamboats" (Kure Beach: North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, 2007).

In 1885, just about halfway through *Greenville's* tenure on the Tar-Pamlico, a steamboat named *R. L. Myers* (the second named in honor of Reading Myers, late senior partner of John Myers Sons) appeared along Washington's waterfront (Figure 31).⁹⁹ Owned and operated by the Old Dominion Steamship Company (which purchased John Myers Sons in 1872), and captained primarily by William A. Parvin, *R. L. Myers* began making "daily trips up the Tar River to Greenville and intermediate landings."¹⁰⁰ The vessel measured nearly 119 feet in length and 25 feet wide, with three saloons for passengers (the Main, Women's, and Colored) and an ample foredeck for cargo.



Figure 31: *R. L. Meyers* (II) at a Tar River landing, c. 1897.¹⁰¹

The second *R. L. Myers* continued in the tradition of the first, running almost exclusively on the Tar-Pamlico River, but occasionally making trips (group excursions)

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Bridger, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 146; James Ellison, "Recollections of Washington" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 90.

¹⁰¹ Henry Clark Bridger's Jr. Collection, "*R. L. Myers* at Tar River Landing" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center, n.d.).

to the Outer Banks. In 1905, Old Dominion sold the vessel to the Norfolk & Southern Railroad and left the Tar-Pamlico market for good. Three years later in May 1908, after a career of nearly 23 years, *R. L. Myers* was taken out of service and dismantled. Local resident Bruce Cotten described his relationship with vessel and crew a few years later in 1911.

The Old Dominion Steamship Company operated boats on the river for a period of about forty years. Their steamer, the *R. L. Myers*, was peculiarly well-fitted for river work. It was the *R. L. Myers* 2nd, that I knew the best. Her captain, W. A. Parvin, was a northern man who coming south just before the war, did a bit in the Confederate Army, and ever afterwards ran a boat on Tar River. Many trips I have taken with him and his mate, George Dowdy, to Tarboro and Washington, and return. I knew every landing from Tarboro to Washington, and am still filled with the lore of Tar River, absorbed from Captain Parvin and George Dowdy, as well as from Hanks, the engineer, and old Uncle Arden, a negro engineer, who spent his entire life in voyages up and down the river.¹⁰²

In 1888, Lycurgus L. Staton and E. V. Zoeller, two well known nineteenth century Tarboro businessmen and maritime trade advocates, reorganized the Farmer's Co-op and Manufacturing Company as the Tar River Oil Company.¹⁰³ The company's primary purpose was the production and sale of cotton related by-products. Staton served as the company's president, and Zoeller as secretary and treasurer (Figure 32). The two businessmen kept their headquarters in Tarboro while operating a cottonseed oil mill in nearby Shiloh (two miles upriver from Tarboro Landing), thereby strategically positioning the organization to make the best use of local resources. The Tar River Oil Company's principle commercial workhorses were the steamboats *Beta*, *Shiloh*, and *Tarboro* (II). The vessels not only served the interest of the company, but also the local

¹⁰² Bruce Cotten, *As We Were*, 50-51.

¹⁰³ Tar River Oil Company Records, (Greenville, NC: Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University).

community at large by providing freight and passenger services. Staton and Zoeller planted their commercial roots firmly within an association of local agriculture and regional transportation, and worked diligently to support the efforts of both.

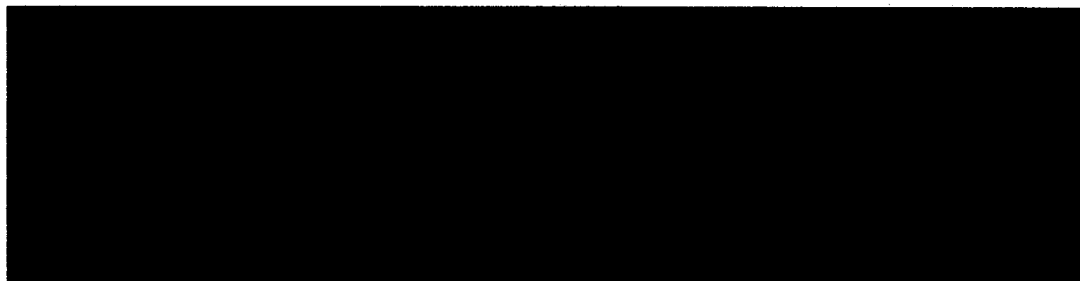


Figure 32: Letterhead from a Tar River Oil Company invoice.¹⁰⁴

In June 1895, Staton and Zoeller also served as directors of the newly founded Tarboro Board of Trade, a group of Edgecombe County merchants and farmers established to promote local manufacturing, transportation, and agriculture.¹⁰⁵ Not since the years before the Civil War had the regional economy looked so promising. Confidence was high as local commercial spending surpassed \$400,000 in the second half of 1891.¹⁰⁶ Navigational improvements continued, with \$56,000 spent along a sixty mile stretch river since 1876, reducing shipping costs by twelve to twenty-five percent.¹⁰⁷

Mr. George M. Doughty, mate and pilot on the steamer *R. L. Myers*, running on the Tar River, writing to the [*Wilmington Weekly*] *Star* from Washington, NC, speaks in high terms of Captain Bell, in charge of river and harbor improvements. "I have been" he says "a pilot on the river for the past 12 years, and can cheerfully say that it is in better condition for navigation than I have ever before seen it."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Henry Clark Bridgers, Jr., Papers, "Tar River Oil Company Invoice, May 9th, 1907" (Greenville, NC: Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University).

¹⁰⁵ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 348-349.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Wilmington Messenger*, December 8, 1887.

¹⁰⁸ *Wilmington Weekly Star*, July 15, 1892.

Capital investments increased along with population densities, and residents bought and sold properties at near record highs. The wheels of local business were well greased, with the river once again acting as the corridor to general success. In both lean and prosperous economies, local industry relied upon steam powered vessels like *Beta*, *Shiloh*, and others to keep merchandise and passengers moving along the river.

Alpheus Styron constructed *Beta* in Washington, North Carolina in 1887. It was the second steamboat built under his direction named for a letter of the Greek alphabet (the steamer *Alpha* was the first). Built to measure seventy-seven feet by eighteen feet, with a draft of less than four, *Beta* weighed in at nearly forty gross tons. Its twin boilers powered a single screw, forged to churn exclusively through the dark, shallow waters of the Tar River and its local tributaries.¹⁰⁹ Styron built *Beta* for the primary purpose of carrying cotton products from Tarboro to Washington, yet, occasionally the steamer completed the unusual route upriver from Tarboro to Dunbar. *Beta* established the record for the farthest upstream watershed passage by a steam-powered vessel on the Tar River after it reached a point nearly twenty miles up the shallows of Fishing Creek.¹¹⁰

Beta's upriver achievement was not its only noteworthy claim, however. After leaving Greenville one early morning in November 1886, the vessel approached the bridge crossing at Washington. Emerging out of the mist was a lifeless human form hanging from the river's span.¹¹¹ Captain Styron and the ship's crew carefully recovered the unfortunate soul and transported the body to local authorities. Afterwards, officials

¹⁰⁹ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 353.

¹¹⁰ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 162.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

determined that the dead man was William Parker, a suspect recently acquitted of the murder of local plantation owner, war hero, and community builder General Bryan Grimes. Legend suggests that Parker bragged about his vile misdeed and subsequent release from custody. It seems that several ardent admirers of the General served Parker some post-trial retaliatory justice of their own.

Beta, like many inland steamers, also encountered numerous navigational scrapes during its career. Two accidents beset the vessel and crew in 1890. One was a relatively minor collision following an engine malfunction, but the other involved an impact with a submerged log so violent that *Beta* sank almost immediately. Passengers and crew managed to escape the flooding vessel, but the accident destroyed all of the cargo. It took more than a year of struggle, expense, and lost income before the steamer was finally raised and returned to service. *Beta* was never quite the same after that unpleasant event, but still managed to work on the river for an additional six years. In 1896, company officials sold *Beta* to local breakers who dismantled the vessel and sold anything of value.¹¹²

Just a year prior, in November 1895, an announcement in the *Washington Gazette* declared that the Tar River Oil Company was celebrating a new arrival: "Mr. Zoeller's new steamboat, the *Shiloh*, built by Captain David Liddon at Tarboro is ready to be launched" (Figure 33).¹¹³ On 13 December, the vessel slid down the ways into its natural element before a large group of energetic onlookers. A few weeks later, the *Gazette* reported:

¹¹² Bridgers, Jr., "Extracts from Certificates of Enrollment," n.p.

¹¹³ *Washington Gazette* (North Carolina), November 28, 1895.

Steamer *Shiloh*, a smart little craft is now making trips from Tarboro to Washington bringing loads of cotton, and other freight as well as passengers. She is a pretty, strong, well made serviceable boat just suited for the Tar River and is a credit to Captain David S. Liddon who built her at Tarboro and to Captain M. H. Bonner, her master.¹¹⁴

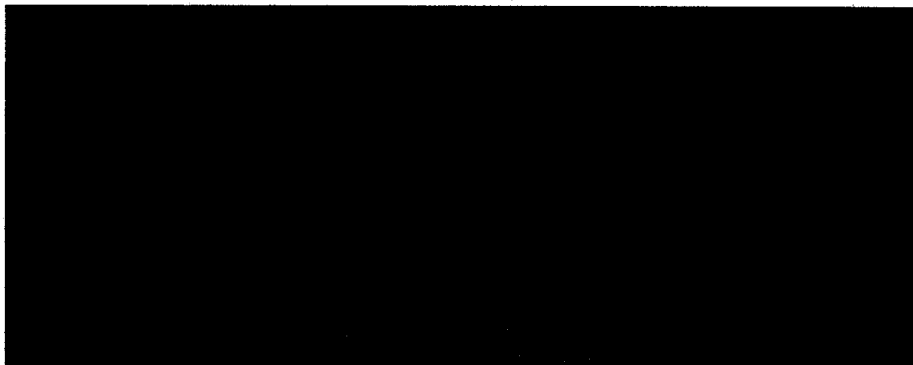


Figure 33: The steamers *Tarboro* (II) and *Shiloh* at Tarboro Landing (also E. V. Zoellers' steam yacht *Pastime*).¹¹⁵

So began the service of a thirty year veteran of inland passages along the Atlantic coast. The wooden hulled, screw-propelled steamer *Shiloh* and its crews spent most of their careers operating between Tarboro and Washington, but also made passages to the Chesapeake Bay region.¹¹⁶ D. S. Liddon constructed *Shiloh* eighty-three feet by twenty-three feet, and with a displacement of nearly eighty-five tons. Construction costs were considered very reasonable at the time, coming in at just under \$4,000. *Shiloh* drew four feet unburdened, and was designed with a round head, square stern, and two decks: the lower for cargo and crew quarters, and the uppermost for pilothouse, galley, and passenger saloons.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ *Washington Gazette* (North Carolina), January 9, 1896.

¹¹⁵ Henry C. Bridgers Jr. Collection, "Boat Landing, Tarboro, N.C." (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, n.d.).

¹¹⁶ Bridgers, Jr., "Extracts from Certificates of Enrollment," n.p.

¹¹⁷ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., "Research Notebook: Compilation: All Sources vs. Certificates of Enrollment" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, c.1974), n.p.

In 1896, R.A. Zoeller (the relationship to E.V. Zoeller is uncertain, but probable) took command of *Shiloh* from Captain Bonner and became the vessel's primary master for the remainder of its time on the river (there were several relief captains, however).¹¹⁸ *Shiloh's* five-man crew spent most of its time loading, delivering, and offloading bales of cotton, bags of cotton hulls and linters, barrels of cottonseed oil, guano fertilizer, timber products, foodstuffs, coal, assorted fish, and virtually anything else that needed to move along the river. Like other Tar-Pamlico vessels before, *Shiloh* took groups on chartered excursions. Two 1889 editions of Greenville's *Kings Weekly* reported Sunday outings onboard *Shiloh* for the Greenville Colored Firemen and children from the Hickory Hill Colored Sunday School.¹¹⁹

In 1925, after thirty years of Tar-Pamlico operations, the Tar River Oil Company sold the vessel to J. W. Marshall of West Point, Virginia.¹²⁰ Marshall removed the upper deck, extended the main deck to 102 feet, and converted the vessel's engine to gasoline-power. The latter proved to be *Shiloh's* undoing. On 11 October 1925, shortly after the transition, an onboard engine fire destroyed the vessel near Toll's Point, Virginia on the Rappahannock River.¹²¹ Although there was no loss of human life, *Shiloh's* tragic destruction foretold the decline of commercial steam power on inland rivers. Ship owners were not replacing vessels like *Shiloh* and *Beta*, and as others like them diminished so too did a key technological method of transportation and commerce.

¹¹⁸ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 196.

¹¹⁹ *Kings Weekly* (Greenville, NC), May 24, 1899, 8 August 1899.

¹²⁰ Bridgers, Jr., "Extracts from Certificates of Enrollment," n.p.

¹²¹ Bridgers, Jr., "Research Notebook: Compilation: All Sources vs. Certificates of Enrollment," n.p.

None of the Tar River Oil Company boats made extraordinary sums of money during their time in service, nor did steamers like *Cotton Plant* or *Greenville*.¹²² At an 1884 year-end business meeting of the Tar River Transportation Company, officials presented stockholders with records indicating annual revenues worth \$17,000 with expenses totaling \$17,500, showing a net loss of \$500 (worth considerably more in nineteenth century dollars than today). The resulting wage-cutting, lay-offs, and overall disapproval nearly caused a general strike of local river workers. Still, the boats kept steaming and commerce continued to flow. All involved realized that Tar River steamboats existed as a critical link in the chain of local enterprise, and their absence, even for a short while, would cause long-term damage to economic, social, and community development.

The increased rate of ship construction on the Tar-Pamlico also reveals the importance of maritime commerce to the local economy at the time. Between the end of Reconstruction and the second decade of the twentieth century (forty-two years), over sixty sizeable commercial vessels of both steam and sail (and perhaps more recorded generally as North Carolina-built) were constructed in the area, most in or around Washington (Table 8-9). Annual commercial revenues of the waterfront hub increased from \$500,000 to an estimated \$4.8 million between the years 1876 and 1891.¹²³ In 1893, the *Washington Gazette* declared its hometown as "The Shipbuilding and Fish and Oyster Metropolis of North Carolina."¹²⁴ Even after a railroad branch of the Atlantic

¹²² Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 142.

¹²³ Michael R. Hill, "Historical Research Report: The Waterfront Area of Washington, North Carolina," (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1984), 9.

¹²⁴ Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," 41.

Coast Line connected with Washington, the town's waterfront remained a vital local, regional, and international maritime center. In the late nineteenth century, railroads and commercial vessels often worked in partnership with one another, complementing individual corridors of commercial service. That level of familiarity would not continue for long, however, as technology, economy, and national shipping practices continued to evolve. The few decades prior to the turn of the twentieth century represent the zenith of maritime transportation, commerce, and shipbuilding along the Tar-Pamlico River.

Table 8: Chronological List of Recorded Vessels Constructed near Washington, NC, 1878-1914 (L=Length, B=Beam, D=Depth, in feet).¹²⁵

Name	Type	Year	Tons	L	B	D	Comments
<i>Greenville</i>	Steam Screw	1879	69	112	24	3	Rebuilt after fire: 1880
<i>R. L. Myers (I)</i>	Steam Screw	1879	98	109	25	4	Owner: Old Dominion
<i>Samuel Brown</i>	Barge	1880	99				Home port: New York
<i>Bessie</i>	Schooner	1880	6	36	10	3	
<i>Charles Fisher</i>	Barge	1880	99				Home port: New York
<i>Tarboro (I)</i>	s/w Steamer	1881	143	115	27	4	Rebuilt: 1882
<i>Cora</i>	Schooner	1881	175	86	23	8	
<i>Minerva</i>	Schooner	1881	19	45	14	4	Home port: Edenton
<i>Tarboro (I)</i>	p/w Steamer	1881	143				20 hp
<i>Washington</i>	Steam Screw	1881	162	120	27	4	Owner: Old Dominion
<i>Abraham Drucker</i>	Barge	1882	178				Home port: New York
<i>John Christol</i>	Barge	1882	178				Home port: New York
<i>Beaufort</i>	Steam Screw/ Barge	1883	386	125	24	7	Owner: Old Dominion; Rebuilt: 1890/1898
<i>Bessie</i>	Sloop	1883	8	34	11	3	3274
<i>Margie</i>	Steamer	1883	86				
<i>Etta T. Weston</i>	Schooner	1884	12	38	12	3	135811
<i>Eveline</i>	Schooner	1884	20	43	17	4	Home port: New Bern
<i>Petrel</i>	Schooner	1884	28				Potential error w/date
<i>R. L. Myers (II)</i>	Steam Screw	1885	128	119	25	4	Owner: Old Dominion
<i>Alpha</i>	Steam Screw	1887	233	121	23	8	
<i>Beta</i>	Steam Screw	1887	40	77	18	3	Rebuilt: 11/1890
<i>Ella</i>	s/w Steamer	1888	31	54	12	5	Home port: New Bern; 45 hp
<i>South Lake</i>	Schooner	1888	24	52	17	4	Home port: New Bern
<i>Nautilus</i>	Steam Screw	1889	46	66	15	4	Tow service

¹²⁵ Still, and Stephenson, "North Carolina Vessel Database;" Bridgers, Jr., "Research Notebook: Compilation: All Sources vs. Certificates of Enrollment," n.p.

<i>J. Hilles</i>	Barge	1890	295				Home port: Phila.
<i>Rappahannock</i>	Barge	1890	295				Home port: Phila.
<i>E. M. Tilley</i>	Schooner	1891	15	53	18	4	Home port: Norfolk
<i>Elgin</i>	Schooner	1891	42	59	16	4	Home port: New Bern
<i>Ivy</i>	Schooner	1891	9	35	10	3	Home port: New Bern
<i>Estelle</i>	Schooner	1892	11	35	12	4	Home port: New Bern
<i>Glide</i>	Schooner	1892	8	30	12	3	Home port: New Bern
<i>A. B. Covington</i>	Steam Screw	1893	57	64	17	7	48 hp
<i>Albemarle</i>	Dredge	1893	72	60	24	5	
<i>Barney</i>	Steam Screw	1893	20	54	12	4	Home port: New Bern; Tug service; 12 hp
<i>General George</i>	Steam	1893	24	73	13	5	USACE vessel; wood hull
<i>Thom</i>	Launch						
<i>Alice</i>	Sharpie	1894	11	45	13	3	107091
<i>Aurora</i>	Steamer	1894	98	103	23	5	
<i>Marie</i>	s/w Steamer	1894	121	86	27	8	Home port: New York
<i>Florence</i>	Steam Screw	1896	20	48	12	4	
<i>Frances</i>	Steamer	1896	20	48	12	4	
<i>Isabella</i>	Gas Screw	1896	13	56	12	4	Two decks, two masts, sharp built, round stern
<i>Tar River</i>	Steam Screw	1896	217	125	24	5	Owner: Old Dominion
<i>Alma</i>	Steamer	1897	11	41	13	2	
<i>Bruce</i>	Steam Screw	1898	11	39	11	3	One deck
<i>E. M. Short</i>	Steam Screw	1899	27	52	14	4	Tow service
<i>Mystery</i>	Gas Screw	1900	13	45	13	4	
<i>Sally W.</i>	Schooner	1900	7	42	14	3	117006
<i>Ethel</i>	Schooner	1901	98	119	27	4	
<i>Goldsboro</i>	Steam Screw	1901	99	100	21	5	Tow service
<i>Myrtie</i>	Gas Screw	1902	10	39	10	4	Tow service
<i>Alteiro</i>	Gas Screw	1903	13	35	10	5	Tow service
<i>Magnolia</i>	Gas Screw	1903	14	50	11	4	Freight service
<i>Mrytle</i>	Schooner	1903	26	50	16	4	
<i>Maud and Reg</i>	Gas Screw	1905	12	54	13	4	Tow service
<i>Zelda</i>	Gas Screw	1906	13	40	10	3.5	Passenger service
<i>Marjorie</i>	Steamer	1907					
<i>Dependent</i>	Gas Screw	1912	14	55	14	4	Passenger service
<i>Eloise</i>	Steam Screw	1913	71	67	15	5	Passenger service
<i>Agnes F.</i>	Gas Screw	1914	56	56	14	4	
<i>Rover</i>		1914	15	44	11	4	Tow service

Table 9: Chronological List of Recorded Vessels Constructed on the Tar River above Washington, 1878-1920 (L=Length, B=Beam, D=Depth, in feet).¹²⁶

Name	Type	Year	Tons	L	B	D	Comments
<i>Shiloh</i>	Steam Screw	1895	85	83	23	4	Built at Tarboro
<i>Tarboro (II)</i>	p/w Steamer	1898	72	77	23	6	Built at Tarboro
<i>Lillian</i>	Gas Screw	1904	15	56	15	3	Built at Falkland

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to present the vital elements of post-Civil War maritime settlement on the Tar-Pamlico River, including the improvements of Reconstruction, growth of intermediate landing communities, significance of steam-powered riverboats, and role of leading agricultural and maritime industrialists. Reconstruction tackled the complicated tasks of reducing trade restrictions, clearing navigational hazards, rebuilding infrastructure, while initiating a slow adjustment to shifts in social, demographic, and economic conditions. Initially, communities along the river were devastated, with much of their population deceased or scattered elsewhere. Shipbuilding was virtually nonexistent, and commercial transportation was limited to just one war-weary steamboat and a single stage. Scarcity, however, does not always lead to ultimate ruin.

The process of regeneration was exceptionally slow for many local residents, as natural processes were the only real instruments of sustainability and economic rebirth. With the time-tested advantages of agricultural production and waterborne transportation came improved commercial market shares, lower unemployment, and increased demand for commercial river steamboats, revitalized shipbuilding in Washington and elsewhere. Expenditures of both public and private resources allowed for enhanced shipping channels, which also expanded riverside development. Communities and farms once laid to waste by war (or previously nonexistent) gathered economic strength as more vessels found their way to and from inland landings. Residents of Tarboro, Princeville, Old Sparta, Falkland, Penny Hill, Greenville, Pactolus, Grimesland, Washington, and the

townships in-between embraced the agricultural developments, expanded populations, and economic accomplishments associated with increased river activity. Despite the growing connections of railroad in the latter half of the nineteenth century, river transportation in the three-county region was the most viable instrument of economic security and community development.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETING TRANSITIONS

River Commerce vs. Overland Transportation Technologies

In 1898, officials from the Tar River Oil Company launched the riverboat *Tarboro* (II), the last commercial steam vessel built to operate exclusively on the Tar River.¹ The seventy-seven foot sternwheeler ran for twenty-five successful years and held the distinction of being the only steamer to originally show *Tarboro* as its homeport on official enrollment documents.² In 1915, driven by increased overland competition, officials moved the vessel downriver to a new home at Washington, where it operated for its last eight years. During this time, Washington's waterfront was congested with more than fifty individual wharves, some recently constructed and others worn from years of continued use. Major changes in the local maritime economy were underway.³ The lucrative lumber markets of the West Indies were gone, and Washington's reliance on shipbuilding shifted to refit and repair as orders for new vessels dwindled. By 1923, time and changing technologies had reduced the steamer *Tarboro* to a mere fraction of its original commercial worth, and it was "abandoned as unfit for further navigation."⁴ *Tarboro's* exit from the Tar River stage with no replacement at hand was a sure indicator of technological transition in North Carolina's commercial transportation system.

¹ Monika S. Fleming, *Edgecombe County Along the Tar River* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 86-87.

² Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center Manuscript, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, 1979), 200.

³ Michael R. Hill, "Historical Research Report: The Waterfront Area of Washington, North Carolina," (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1984), 11-12.

⁴ Bridgers, Jr., "Steamboats on the Tar," 216.

At the close of the nineteenth century, steamboats and railroads together made up the primary transport structure in eastern North Carolina. An 1891 Edgecombe County marketing pamphlet argued: "No town in the state has superior railroad and navigation facilities. Four lines of railroads and three steamboat lines give to Tarboro all the benefits and advantages of cheap freights and easy communication with all sections."⁵ Yet, as rail lines accumulated more market share through expansion and increased efficiency, river transportation began to wane. By 1903, the Old Dominion Steamship Company had left the Tar River market, and the only commercial steamers remaining were those few owned by the Tar River Oil Company.⁶

Railroad technologies evaded many of the pitfalls of river-borne commerce, including low, frozen, or flooded water levels, lengthy running times, and problems with restricted inland travel and outbound connections. The severe winters of 1881 and 1900 shut down transportation on the river for extended periods due to frozen conditions.⁷ Severe floods in 1867, 1873, 1877, 1884, 1887, 1902, 1908, and 1913 also interrupted river service while causing considerable damage to improvements and infrastructure.⁸ Remarkably, the reinforced railroad bridges at Tarboro and Greenville (built in 1889 and replaced in 1892 respectively) remained intact following the latter three events. Even when the waterway was open, steamers often took eight to twelve hours to travel the forty-four miles round trip from Washington to Greenville.⁹ Additionally, the coastal

⁵ As quoted in: Fleming, *Edgecombe County Along the Tar River*, 86.

⁶ Fleming, *Edgecombe County Along the Tar River*, 87.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 86; *Kings Weekly*, January 9, 1900.

⁸ *Weekly Star* (Wilmington, NC), February 19, 1873, May 30, 1873; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 9, 1887, November 10, 1889, April 20, 1892; *Wilson Times* (North Carolina), September 4, 1908; Hill, 13.

⁹ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., "Research Notebook: Extract from the Logbook of Steamer *R. L. Myers*,

transportation network relied heavily upon connections made through the Great Dismal Swamp and Albemarle and Chesapeake Canals (opened 1805 and 1859 respectively), and transferring cargo from river steamers onto northbound vessels and canal barges was laborious, costly, and time-consuming.¹⁰

Although North Carolina was comparatively lax in developing a respectable railway network, once underway the system slowly gathered momentum. The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad passed through Rocky Mount (north/south) in 1840, providing the first alternate means of overland commercial transport in Edgecombe County.¹¹ Yet, it was 1860 before railroad officials sold enough stock to build a branch into Tarboro to augment river traffic.¹² In March, the first of two iron rail shipments arrived from Newport, England aboard the brig *Mary McCrea*, and by August construction was completed.¹³ The eastern push was due mostly to the efforts of Robert R. Bridgers, who later controlled the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad and founded the Atlantic Coast Line. The Tarborough Branch Railroad, as it was known (a subsidiary of Wilmington & Weldon), eventually connected with Tar River traffic at "Sorbon," on the waterfront farm of William L. Petway.¹⁴ Unfortunately for local interests, it was not until after Reconstruction that railway construction progressed throughout the three-county

11/6/1902-3/27/1903" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center, North Carolina Office of Archives & History), n.p.

¹⁰ Kate I. Goodall, "The Burroughs Wreck: A Key to Eighteenth Century Ship Construction Techniques and the Life and Death of the Port of Edenton" (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 2003), 25.

¹¹ Alan D. Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 58; J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina*, rep. (Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc. 1979), 354.

¹² Loretta Lautzenheiser, "Archaeological Survey of US 64 Relocation, Tarboro to Parmele, Edgecombe, Martin, and Pitt Counties, North Carolina" (Tarboro, NC: Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., 1989), 26-27.

¹³ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., *East Carolina Railway: Route of the Yellow Hammer* (Tarboro, NC: T & E Publishers of Louisville, Carolina Division, 1973), 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

region. Increases in local population were still more related to river traffic than railways.

In 1887, the *Wilmington Messenger* reported:

The town of Washington, NC has increased 25 per cent in population and property, and the town of Greenville has increased from 912 population up to 2,505 population and \$600,000 in real estate in 1886: the development of both of these since 1876 being almost entirely due to river improvements.¹⁵

Through several failed attempts at raising railway capital and sporadic construction efforts, steamboats remained the most vital and economically advantageous means of commercial transportation.

The Tarboro *Southerner* estimates that \$50,000 per year is saved to the inhabitants of Beaufort, Pitt, and Edgecombe on account of the steamers running on the Tar River keeping down the freights. The *Kingston Journal* likewise praises the river system, and says that the steamers deserve credit for money saved to the people on account of competition with the railroad.¹⁶

In 1882, after twenty-one years of troubled planning and construction, the first train on the eastern Seaboard & Raleigh line (later the Albemarle & Raleigh) arrived in Tarboro from Williamston (located in Martin County, approximately thirty miles east of Tarboro and twenty miles north of Washington).¹⁷ Three years later the Jamesville & Washington line (often referred to as the "Jolt & Wiggle") began service, making one roundtrip per day between the Roanoke and Tar-Pamlico riverfront communities.¹⁸ The line to Williamston, in conjunction with newly constructed spurs to Scotland Neck and Greenville, connected small towns east of the Tar River with communities along the Roanoke and points further north and west. According to the *Wilmington Messenger*:

¹⁵ *Wilmington Messenger*, December 8, 1887.

¹⁶ *Southerner* (Tarboro, NC), September 10, 1880.

¹⁷ Bridgers, Jr., *East Carolina Railway: Route of the Yellow Hammer*, 8.

¹⁸ C. Wingate Reed, *Beaufort County: Two Centuries of its History* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1962), 167.

Messrs. R. P. Bowdoin & Son, of this city, are now engaged in driving the piling for the [Scotland Neck Branch of the Atlantic Coast Line] railroad bridge over the Tar River at Greenville. We understand that they are making rapid progress, and expect to complete the work in a week or two.¹⁹

This additional exposure to commercial markets (principally cotton and lumber, and later tobacco) initiated economic growth in outlying communities such as Conetoe, Bethel, and Parmele.²⁰ Other towns, such as Old Sparta, scrambled to attract the interest of government officials and railroad executives to little or no effect.²¹ A line immediately west of the Tar River would not be built until the turn of the twentieth century when the East Carolina Railway opened.

The year 1892 saw additional railroad construction in both Tarboro and Washington. The *Messenger* stated:

Mr. P. Linehan, of Raleigh, is in the city [Wilmington]. He was yesterday awarded the contract for building the piers and abutments for the new iron bridge which the Atlantic Coast Line is to erect over the Tar River at Tarboro.²²

That same year, the Atlantic Coast Line also began service on the Washington Branch between Parmele and Washington, running two trains each day.²³ Small communities along the way, such as Pactolus, Oakley, Stokes, and Whichard found new life as railway stops on that route.²⁴ Large railway projects ceased the following year, however, after the collapse of several large northern railroads caused associated stock in other railroad markets to rapidly decline. A financial panic rose throughout the country and spread to

¹⁹ *Wilmington Messenger*, October 2, 1889, November 10, 1889.

²⁰ Lautzenheiser, 27.

²¹ Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., 355-356.

²² *Wilmington Messenger*, April 20, 1892.

²³ Reed, 167.

²⁴ Henry T. King, *Sketches of Pitt County: A Brief History of the County, 1704-1910*, rep. (Greenville, NC: Era Press, 1976), 190.

overseas markets as well. International investors pulled large sums of capital from the United States economy causing a cascade effect crippling many commercial regions, including parts of North Carolina. Tar-Pamlico residents once again fell back upon the time tested reliability of river-borne commerce, and in association with the recently completed rail lines, weathered the economic storms of the last decade.

In addition to its late century economic struggles, Washington suffered another disastrous fire on 3 September 1900.²⁵ Large portions of the downtown area, rebuilt just years before following the Civil War, once again burned to the ground. Nevertheless, the first decade of the twentieth century was very productive for local railway development in Beaufort, Pitt, and Edgecombe Counties. In 1906, the Norfolk & Southern Railroad came to Washington, followed shortly thereafter by the Washington & Vandemere Line.²⁶ A year later, the first train to travel through from Washington to Raleigh completed its maiden trip.²⁷ In 1908, laborers (including many convicts) completed construction on the East Carolina Railway, which ran from Tarboro south through Farmville into Hookerton (Figure 34).²⁸ The latter years of the first decade also saw railways (a novel, new technology to many local residents) taking over group excursions, once the exclusive domain of steam vessels.²⁹

The economic momentum begun by steamboats in the 1880s was reinvigorated by rail technology in the 1900s. As a result, communities without direct rail connections in

²⁵ Margaret F. Winfield, "Fires and Fire Fighters" in *Washington and the Pamlico*, ed. Ursula F. Loy and Pauline M. Worthy (Washington, NC: Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 324.

²⁶ Reed, 167.

²⁷ *Washington Progress* (North Carolina), August 18, 1907.

²⁸ Bridgers, Jr., *East Carolina Railway: Route of the Yellow Hammer*, 91.

²⁹ *Washington Progress* (North Carolina), October 1, 1908.

the century's first decade began to wane in population and economic influence. Those possessing immediate access to both rail and river corridors (hubs like Tarboro, Greenville, and Washington) were doubly blessed and prospered considerably. In the 1910s, the Atlantic Coast Line operated railway lines through Tarboro, Parmele, Greenville, Pactolus, Washington and several other local communities (Figure 35). Populations of many towns within the local transportation network (of both river and rail) began to shift in relation to the dominant local technology.

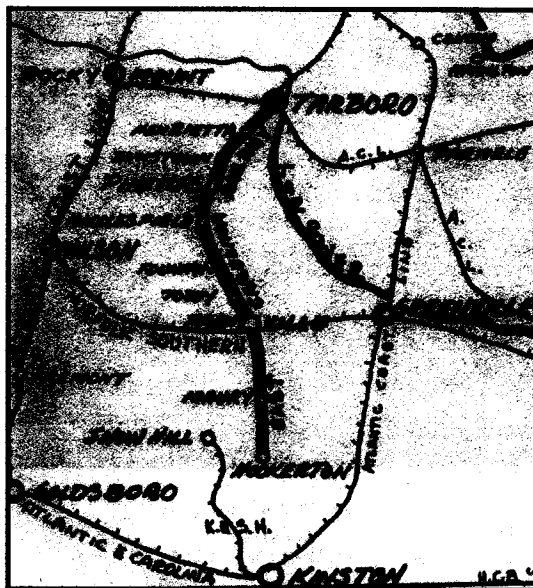


Figure 34: Route of the East Carolina Railway, c 1908.³⁰

The small village of Pactolus, originally settled approximately a mile north of the Tar River in 1790, tripled in population between 1900 and 1910 from 52 persons to 154 on account of the new railroad stop.³¹ Stokes and Oakley did not actually emerge onto the commercial scene until the opening of the Washington Branch, but faded after other Atlantic Coast lines became increasingly dominant. Norfolk Southern's line from

³⁰ Bridgers, Jr., *East Carolina Railway: Route of the Yellow Hammer*, i.

³¹ King, 190.

Washington to Greenville also had an effect as it acquired more local market share. The railway eventually passed through Grimesland, bringing newfound influence to a community struggling with the decline of river traffic. Rail travel also influenced the small town of Bethel. Officials had already incorporated the crossroads town by the time of the railroad's arrival, due to its significance as a local postal center.³² Yet, the community expanded further once Albemarle and Raleigh officials included it on the Williamston route and local merchant-farmers began moving their businesses closer to the station. Conetoe, incorporated in 1887 and originally known as Warren Town, also gathered commercial merit as a rail stop, and later, with the advent of the automobile industry, as a small crossroads transportation community.³³



Figure 35: The Atlantic Coast Line in eastern North Carolina, 1914.³⁴

³² Ibid., 183; Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History*, 98.

³³ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 349; Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History*, 98.

³⁴ Steve Storey, "Georgia's Railroad History & Heritage," Atlantic Coast Line Map: 1914, <http://railga.com/acl14.html>.

On the western side of the Tar River, towns such as Pinetops, Macclesfield, Farmville, and Fountain (among others) emerged onto the field of commercial transportation with the arrival of the East Carolina Railway. Founder Henry C. Bridgers, Sr. named the first two communities; Pinetops for a remark his sister made about area pine trees, and Macclesfield after his ancestral home in England.³⁵ These small railroad terminals (many originally used as camps for railway construction workers) first established simple warehouses and general stores, and later banks and agricultural mills, as a result of the local railroad's influx.³⁶ With further expansion came more residents, neighborhoods, schools, and churches.

Conversely, communities that once flourished due to Tar River steamboat traffic, but did not acquire railroad terminals, began to degenerate. William H. Dean, Jr. stated in his 1938 doctoral dissertation "The Theory of the Geographic Location of Economic Activities" that:

Improvements in the technology of transport, whether by land or water, increase the relative importance of primary nodes [a point of connection in a network] and diminish the relative significance of others through selection of routes and sites depending upon specific features incidental to the improved technology.³⁷

Old Sparta, Falkland, Penny Hill, and Bruce all lost commercial value and mercantile related population, while many other towns did not. Precise census information is often difficult to synthesize from local township data, but demographic downturns in these

³⁵ Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History*, 99.

³⁶ Turner and Bridgers, Jr., 350; Scott Power, ed., *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina* (Pitt County, NC: The Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1991), 113; Sara V. Jenkins, ed., *The Edgecombe Story* (Tarboro, NC: Edgecombe County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 52.

³⁷ William H. Dean, "The Theory of the Geographic Location of Economic Activities" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1938), 179.

communities appear to begin as early as 1900, and continued until well after the steamboats left the Tar River. At the turn of the century, 94 percent of Edgecombe County residents lived in rural areas and small communities, but by 1930 that number dropped to 66 percent as more people relocated to larger commercial hubs such as Tarboro and Rocky Mount.³⁸

Railroad companies were often charged with abusing their powers of progression for financial or political gains. A 1924 report from the North Carolina Ship and Water Transportation Commission stated:

[Railroad] discrimination in rates and quality may be as great an evil in a transportation system as no transportation at all. In fact, such a condition may actually be worse, for a community without facilities for getting commodities to and from markets will develop a local self-sufficiency characterized by reasonable comfort and strong self-reliance, while one which has been provided with a transportation system develops a specialized industrial life, which is absolutely dependent upon getting its products and supplies to and from markets. If it is unable to do so upon terms as favorable as other communities with which it is forced to compete, its industries will be paralyzed and its trade will stagnate. Exceptional natural advantages or the vigor and initiative of its citizens may postpone this outcome for a while, but eventually the disaster befalls.³⁹

The report followed a severe (and permanent) downturn in maritime commerce on the Tar-Pamlico. The waterway's commercial worth peaked in 1906 with an estimated value of \$20,816,394.⁴⁰ Just sixteen years later, the calculated value of maritime commerce plummeted to \$3,448,148, a loss of over 83 percent. Agricultural production remained the primary economic driver, but the influences of river traffic and steamboat commerce

³⁸ Watson, *Edgecombe County: A Brief History*, 96.

³⁹ North Carolina Ship and Water Transportation Commission, *Report of the State Ship and Water Transportation Commission* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1924), 99.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

on settlement and population growth had permanently dissolved, supplanted by the technology of the rail (Figure 36).



Figure 36: Atlantic Coast Line's Number 343 at Washington, NC, 1917.⁴¹

As river vessels became less vital to commercial transportation, their continued service was no longer necessary. During the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries North Carolina residents constructed, converted, rebuilt, or salvaged thousands of vessels in order to maintain the flow of maritime commerce. As railways and roads joined to become the primary commercial infrastructure, many vessels were sold, broken down for scrap, or left to deteriorate along local rivers, creeks, or remote backwaters.

Bruce Cotton wrote about his travels on the Tar River in 1911 and commented:

It is a pleasant run down from Yankee Hall around Willow Point where the river widens very considerably and the town of Little Washington comes into full view. A number of old wrecks and hulks of ships are lying in the mud over on the south bank, and the long rows of piles driven across the river to prevent the Yankees from ascending in the Civil War are mute reminders of those strenuous days.⁴²

⁴¹ Richard E. Prince, *Atlantic Coast Line Railroad: Steam Locomotives, Ships, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.) 129.

⁴² Bruce Cotten, *As We Were: A Personal Sketch of Family Life* (Baltimore, MD: Privately Printed, 1935), 54.

Abandoned vessels of both sail and steam were common sites lying derelict near once active Washington berths. Professor Nathan Richards, in his analysis of abandonment theories in "Deep Structures: An Examination of Deliberate Watercraft Abandonment in Australia," empathizes that abandonments are largely diachronic in nature, that is, they represent a chronological perspective, in this case, with relation to cultural transformations of economy and technology.⁴³ The Civil War caused a massive amount of destruction to both local infrastructure and economy. Reconstruction enabled maritime steam technology to rise to new levels of use and efficiency. As railroads took control of the Tar-Pamlico transportation network, the local steamboat economy collapsed. Once the West Indies timber trade shut down, Washington merchants and ship-owners brought the area's commercial sailing tradition to an end, leaving their former workhorses to rot in the mud. Most maritime sites concentrated near the river's primary commercial hub of Washington point to these dynamic periods of political, technological, and economic changes.

Issues of economic necessity related to individual site formation are also important considerations here. River vessels that sank, especially steamboats, were usually quickly re-floated, refurbished, and returned to service. Owners and captains often pushed active commercial vessels beyond their original design specifications, forcing continuing situations of refit and repair. Those in their final days were regularly stripped of useful or saleable equipment and machinery, leaving little of the original assembly intact. Occurrences of channel dredging, flooding, sedimentation, scour, and

⁴³ Nathan Richards, "Deep Structures: An Examination of Deliberate Watercraft Abandonment in Australia" (PhD diss., Flinders University, 2002), 30-31.

natural decay also are significant factors to the ever-changing conditions of Tar-Pamlico maritime sites. Plus, centuries of continuing multi-cultural use along the corridor affects archaeological remains, eliminating substantial amounts of contextual evidence.

A temporal treatment of Tar-Pamlico maritime commerce and vessel abandonment is certainly relevant, as significant amounts of maritime evidence remains for archaeological analysis. East Carolina University's Program in Maritime Studies is continuing its series of surveys and investigations in an effort to thoroughly document the cultural remains of the Tar-Pamlico River. Previous research of commercial watercraft includes a recently published report on the remains of eleven vessels located adjacent to the Washington waterfront at Castle Island. The group consist of a four flatboats, two schooners, two oyster sloops, one river steamboat (possibly *Alma*), one motorized boat (perhaps *Sophie Wood*), and a sailing log canoe.⁴⁴ Questions of age, use, and site formation are plentiful, but the former working vessels seem to date from the early nineteenth to the turn of the twentieth centuries, and appear to have been abandoned.

Several other field projects occurred in Washington's vicinity, including a Phase III excavation of a submerged centerboard schooner near the mouth of Tranters Creek in 2004 (NC-UAB Site #0003TRR). The vessel's broad beam, worn ceiling planking, and assorted repairs indicate multiple years of commercial service (Figure 37). There is also evidence that the vessel may have been refitted or rebuilt at one time, as the centerboard trunk's construction is awkward, and once open mast-steps and mortises are timber

⁴⁴ Bradley A. Rodgers and Nathan Richards, *The Castle Island Ships' Graveyard: The History and Archaeology of Eleven Wrecked and Abandoned Watercraft* (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University, 2006), 25-50.

filled.⁴⁵ The fact that the remains also showed virtually no evidence of ship's fittings, spars, cargo, or other associated artifacts demonstrate the likelihood that its final owners abandoned the craft at the end of its commercial usefulness.

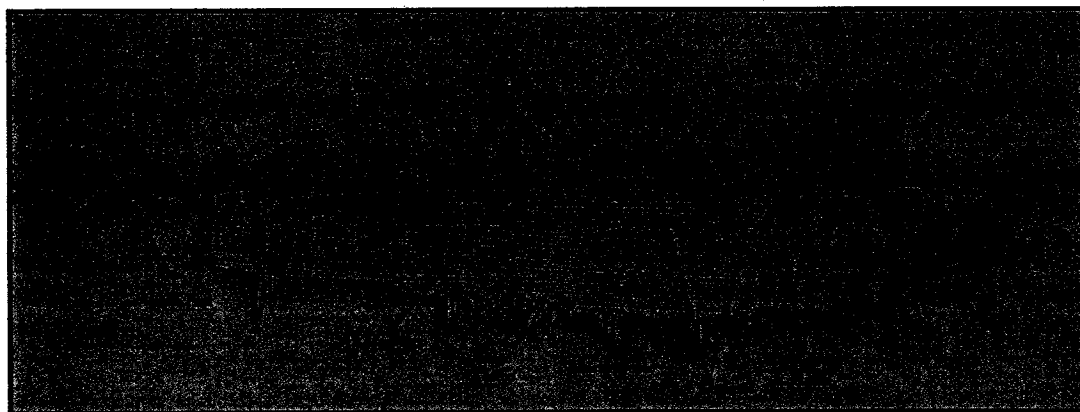


Figure 37: Plan View of Tranter's Creek Site #0003TRR (Tar River), 2004.⁴⁶

Additional Tar-Pamlico historic remains include a large steel-hulled wreck one-half mile south of the Grimesland Bridge, thought to be a converted military vessel associated with the lumber industry, a wooden North Carolina sailing flatboat, similar to a scow schooner, in nearby Chocowinity Bay, a turn of the twentieth century tugboat (NC-UAB #011TRR) approximately one-half mile north of the Route 17 bridge (apparently salvaged of machinery and scuttled), a steam-powered vessel downriver between channel markers #18 and #19 (c.1890-1892, NC-UAB #0001PMR), a wooden sailing vessel purposely abandoned immediately offshore of Washington Park at the site of a former fertilizer factory and military shipyard, a centerboard schooner (in conjunction with several other wooden sailing vessels) positioned just south of the former

⁴⁵ J. Travis Snyder, "Fall Field School Notebook" (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Manuscript, 2004), 21-29.

⁴⁶ Program in Maritime Studies, "Tranter's Creek Site: Plan View," (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University, 2004).

S. R. Fowle and Sons Lumber Mill and adjacent to a former south shore landing site, and multiple others.⁴⁷ Abandonment of historic vessels, in the Tar-Pamlico and elsewhere was a common occurrence as the individual commercial value of vessels diminished (Table 10).

Table 10: Partial Disposition List of Known Tar-Pamlico Commercial Steam Vessels.⁴⁸

Vessel Name	Place/Year Built	Disposition
<i>Edmund D. McNair</i>	Washington, NC/1835	Vessel lost, 1841
<i>George. H. Stout</i>	New Brunswick, NJ/1858	Abandoned, Florida, 1909
<i>Cotton Plant</i>	Philadelphia, PA/1860	Burned at Tarboro, 1881; salvaged
<i>Annie</i>	Wilmington, DE/1861	Sank Tar River, 1895; salvaged to barge
<i>Harbinger</i>	Baltimore, VA/1869	Abandoned Elizabeth City, NC, 1922
<i>Olive</i>	Norfolk, VA/1869	Abandoned Norfolk, VA, 1913
<i>Isis</i>	Norfolk, VA/1870	Lost in St. Johns River, 1882
<i>Vesta</i>	Norfolk, VA/1870	Abandoned St. Augustine, FL, 1889
<i>North East</i>	Wilmington, NC/1872	Burned at Wilmington, NC, 1878
<i>Tuckahoe</i>	Chester, PA/1872	Abandoned Bridgeport, CT, 1906
<i>Pamlico (II)</i>	Green Point, NY/1874	Machinery removed, New York, 1891
<i>Pitt</i>	Washington, NC/1874	Abandoned New Bern, NC (?), 1882
<i>Defiance</i>	Wilmington, DE/1875	Converted to barge, Key West, FL, 1909
<i>New Berne</i>	Chester, PA/1875	Lost off Wachapreague, VA, 1909
<i>Edgecombe (I)</i>	Leachville, NC/1877	Burned at Baltimore, VA, 1888
<i>Greenville</i>	Washington, NC/1879	Abandoned, 1895
<i>R. L. Myers (I)</i>	Washington, NC/1879	Machinery removed, 1885
<i>Tarboro (I)</i>	Washington, NC/1881	Abandoned, 1889
<i>Norman L. Wagner</i>	Canajoharie, NY/1882	Sank Chesapeake Bay, 1912
<i>Beaufort</i>	Washington, NC/1883	Converted to barge, 1898
<i>Lillie</i>	Canajoharie, NY/1883	Burned at Southport, NC 1906
<i>Cleopatra</i>	Colerain, NC/1884	Abandoned, documents lost, 1891
<i>R. L. Myers (II)</i>	Washington, NC/1885	Dismantled, 1908
<i>Beta</i>	Washington, NC/1887	Scrapped at Tarboro, 1896

⁴⁷ Ann Merriman, *The Cypress Landing Shipwreck of Chocowinity Bay: A North Carolina Sail Flat* (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University, 1997), 1; North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch, "Site File: "Snell Wreck" (Kure Beach: North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, 2003); North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch, "Site File: "#011TRR" (Kure Beach: North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, 2003); North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch, "Site File: "#001PMR" (Kure Beach: North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, 2003); Tricia Dodds and Adam Freidman, "The Washington Park Vessel" (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Manuscript, 2007), 8-9; Erica Seltzer, "Underwater Assessment - Site #: ECU04-UW-0002, Washington, North Carolina (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Manuscript, 2005), 4-9.

⁴⁸ Henry C. Bridgers, Jr., "Extracts from Certificates of Enrollment" (Manteo, NC: Outer Banks History Center, North Carolina Office of Archives & History, c.1974), n.p.

<i>Neuse</i>	Wilmington, DE/1890	Scrapped at Baltimore, VA, 1942
<i>Albemarle (III)</i>	Wilmington, DE/1891	Converted; sank Norfolk, VA, 1916
<i>Dennis Simmons</i>	Wilmington, DE/1891	Vessel lost at sea with records, 1925 (?)
<i>Sophie Wood</i>	East Lake, NC/1891	Abandoned, Washington, NC, 1913 (?)
<i>May Bell</i>	Grifton, NC/1892	Abandoned/destroyed, 1914
<i>Carolina</i>	Vanceboro, NC/1893	Abandoned prior to 1914 (?)
<i>Aurora</i>	Washington, NC/1894	Burned at Appomattox River, VA, 1924
<i>Shiloh</i>	Tarboro, NC/1895	Burned at Rappahannock River, VA, 1925
<i>Hatteras</i>	Eddyville, NY/1896	Dismantled and abandoned, NY, 1926
<i>Tar River</i>	Washington, NC/1896	Dismantled, 1903
<i>Alma (I)</i>	Washington, NC/1897	Abandoned, 1899
<i>Edgecombe (II)</i>	Tottenville, NY/1897	Abandoned Washington, NC, 1927
<i>Ocracoke</i>	Tottenville, NY/1898	Dismantled and abandoned, Norfolk, VA, 1933
<i>Tarboro (II)</i>	Tarboro, NC/1898	Abandoned, unfit for further service, Washington, NC, 1923

Dynamic Settlement Scale

The action of settlement is extremely complex. The process contains infinite variables affecting potential patterns of stability, progression, or degeneration.

Stability implies static levels of development; progression requires evolution or positive growth, and degeneration (or devolution) is the process of declining communal quality or vitality.⁴⁹ The essential structure of settlement is based upon a constant linear timeline with numerous spatial and cultural values affecting individual responses. In an effort to quantify and appraise the most significant factors influencing settlement, it may be practical to interpret relevant data through the means of a Dynamic Settlement Scale (DSS). Such a scale can illustrate the dominance or limitations of one technology over another at a given location in time.

Put plainly, the DSS is a measurement tool designed to help visualize the most significant elements of settlement and their associated relationships. Since cultural

⁴⁹ Webster's II, New Riverside Dictionary, s.v. "stability," "progression," "degeneration."

developments do not generally advance in straight line progressions, the process attempts to evaluate relevant available data by assigning standard values through statistical (verified) and interpretive (implied) analyses. Most elements related to settlement values are highly dissimilar. The somewhat straightforward design of this scale originated after several attempts were made to simplify problems of magnitude and standardization. Geographer Peter Haggett addressed similar methods of solving such difficulties in "Scale Components in Geographic Problems."⁵⁰ As with most geographic locations, there are several fundamental factors that have the greatest impact upon local settlement practices. In the case of the Tar-Pamlico River commercial corridor, these included:

- Active Vessels
- Commercial Cargos
- Economy
- Geography
- Maritime Sail Technology
- Maritime Steam Technology
- Maritime Tonnage
- Political Affairs
- Population
- Railroad Technology
- Shipbuilding
- Vessel Arrivals/Departures.

Of these, a few can be removed for various reasons. "Active Vessels" are included in the overall values of sail and steam technologies. "Commercial Cargos" (mostly agricultural related products), while vital to regional trade, are not fundamentally tied to settlement. Market trends and economic shifts related to individual commodities are evaluated as components of "Economics." A lack of detailed evidence concerning

⁵⁰ Peter Haggett, "Scale Components in Geographical Problems," in *Frontiers in Geographical Teaching*, ed. Richard J. Chorley and Peter Haggett (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965).

“Vessel Arrivals” and “Tonnages” at individual landing sites prohibit their addition into this initial scale. Although it is obvious that “Population” data are essential components of settlement, individual totals are more a consequence of community development than direct contributing factors, and are therefore removed.

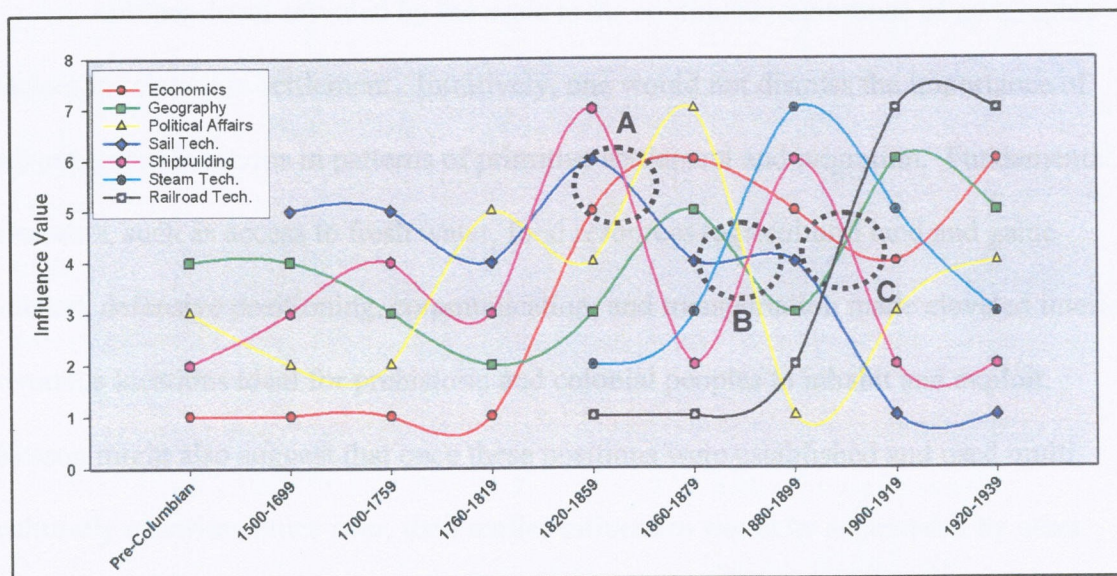
Of the seven remaining factors, “Economics” considers local, regional, and national periods of financial crisis and prosperity. “Geography” was evaluated by appraising the river’s navigability, climate, and available natural resources. “Political Affairs” are not necessarily particular to local authorities, but assessed in regard to wider ranging situations of tension and conflict. “Shipbuilding” is the amount of known vessel construction activity at a given time, while “Maritime Sail and Steam Technologies” encompass the relative number of active vessels and conditions of established trade markets. Lastly, “Railroad Technology” was valued on the historic influx of local competing rail lines and the overall development of the three-county railway infrastructure. After editing the list of primary factors, remaining elements were plotted on a graph representing their impact over time (Table 11). The *x* axis (horizontal) indicates a temporal scale with intervals (in years respectively) of >11,500, 200, 60 (2x), 40, and 20 (4x), while the *y* axis (vertical) represents a standardized “influence value” of regional settlement (represented here by values of 0-8). It is important to remember that the *y* values indicate the interpreted level of influence in relation to each associated factor, not an actual quantity.

In addition to illustrating the primary influences of Tar-Pamlico settlement, Table 11 also shows three significant intersections of four or more individual factors, which

upon further analysis point to several critical moments in North Carolina's history.

Group A, comprised of increased influences in "Political Affairs" and "Economics" and declining weights in "Shipbuilding" and "Sail Technology" represents the prelude to Civil War. Point B, with a mixture of dynamic changes in all but two factors (the already elevated "Economics" and the least influential "Rail Technology") denotes both the war and adjustments of Reconstruction. Point C, which contains elevations in the associated factors of "Railroad Technology" and "Geography" and declines in "Economics" and "Shipbuilding," indicates major forthcoming shifts in commercial transportation technologies (maritime steam en-route to rail).

Table 11: Initial Dynamic Settlement Scale showing seven primary influences of Tar-Pamlico settlement over time.⁵¹



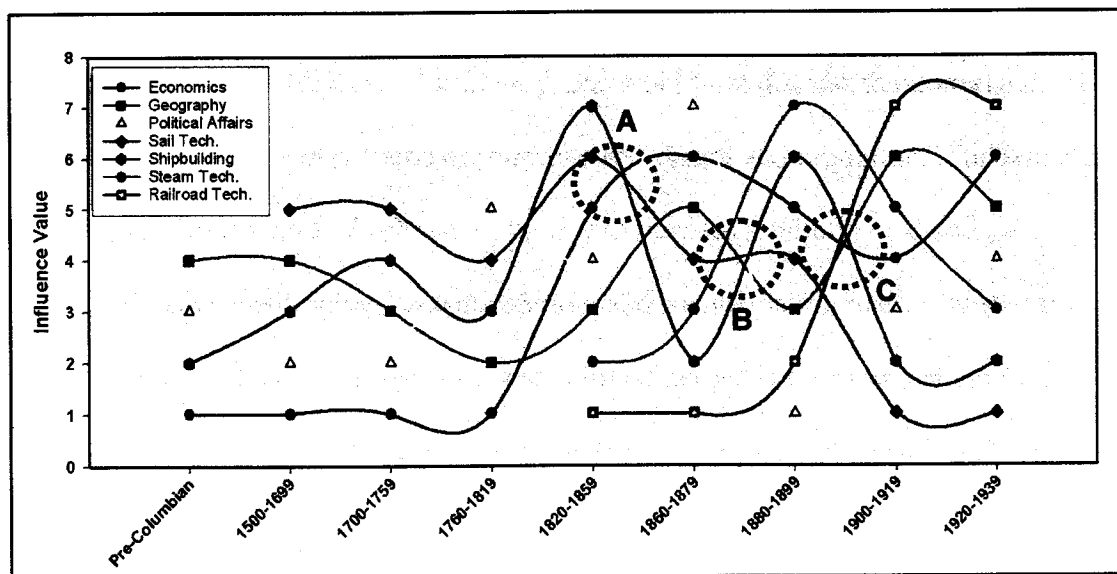
Furthermore, when the influence values are calculated, the combination of all three maritime factors (Sail, Steam, and Shipbuilding Technologies) equal a total value of eighty-one, far surpassing any other individual settlement influence (Table 12). Rankings

⁵¹ Graphic generated by author using SigmaPlot 8.0, SYSTAT Software Inc., Chicago, IL.

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show "Geography" as the prime influence over the full range of time, with "Political Affairs" and "Shipbuilding" tied for second. The results are inherently concentrated, and show "Economics" and "Sail Technology" finishing with the same relative values and tied for third place. Unexpectedly, "Maritime Steam" and "Railroad" technologies came in last, with steam nudging out rail by two points. This likely represents the short time intervals of each technology within this particular scale. Further research and statistical scrutiny will determine if these arithmetic comparisons are valid or not. Yet, even if the actual totals prove too vague for precise associations, a valid argument can be still be offered in defense of maritime commerce and its relationship to Tar-Pamlico human settlement.

Another detail revealed by the scale is the continued importance of geographic factors in relation to settlement. Intuitively, one would not dismiss the importance of advantageous locations in patterns of primitive settlement and migration. Fundamental elements, such as access to fresh water, food resources (agricultural land and game stocks), defensive positioning, communication, and transportation made elevated interior riverside locations ideal for prehistoric and colonial peoples to inhabit and exploit. Reason might also suggest that once these positions were established and used multi-culturally countless times over, their earlier influences would be superseded by other more contemporary factors, such as technology or economics. There is little doubt that geographic factors were vital for primitive settlement (here represented by values of four), yet they also show spikes in relation to the Civil War and emerging overland

technologies. Although it is not represented in this particular application, one can assume that incoming highway technologies would have similar if not more substantial results. By the mid-1930s, there were close to 500,000 registered vehicles on North Carolina roadways.⁵² The influences of crossroad communities, automobile and trucking technologies, road and bridge innovations, and shifts in cultural attitudes pertaining to urbanism and suburban sprawl must indeed have considerable effect on geographic values.

Table 12: Tar-Pamlico River Basin interpretive Influence Values and their associated totals (the higher the number, the greater the influence upon local settlement).

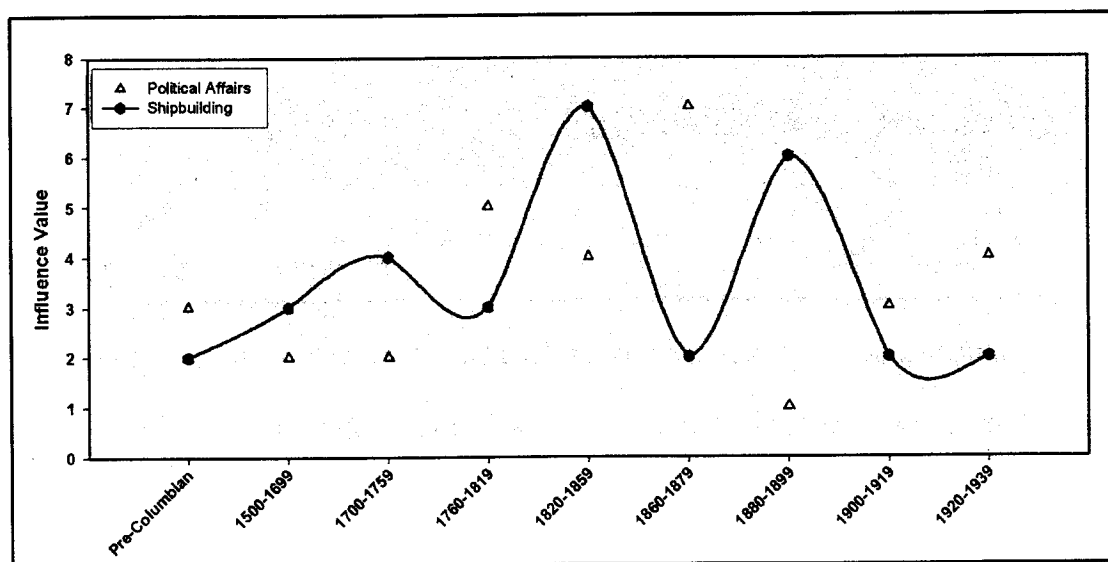
	Pre- History	1500- 1699	1700- 1759	1760- 1819	1820- 1859	1860- 1879	1880- 1899	1900- 1919	1920- 1939	T
Economics	1	1	1	1	5	6	5	4	6	30
Geography	4	4	3	2	3	5	3	6	5	35
Political Affairs	3	2	2	5	4	7	1	3	4	31
Sail Tech.		5	5	4	6	4	4	1	1	30
Ship- building	2	3	4	3	7	2	6	2	2	31
Steam Tech.					2	3	7	5	3	20
Railroad Tech.					1	1	2	7	7	18
Interval (Y)	>11,500	200	60	60	40	20	20	20	20	

Taken as whole, the initial scale seems somewhat chaotic, masking some significant relationships among individual factors. The first of these important associations is the near mirror image represented by "Political Affairs" and "Shipbuilding" (Table 13). Shipbuilding's influence began to rise as prehistoric vessels, such as dugout canoes, were replaced by more sophisticated merchant sailing craft.

⁵² William N. Still, "The Shipbuilding Industry in Washington, North Carolina," in *Of Tar Heel Towns, Shipbuilders, Reconstructionists and Alliancemen: Papers in North Carolina History*, ed. Joseph F. Steelman et al. (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Publications, 1981), 48.

During the same period, the emerging European foothold in North Carolina replaced (eliminated) the influence of Native American tribal politics. In the eighteenth century, the effect of shipbuilding diminished in comparison to the American Revolution and the emergence of a new republic, but rose again in the early nineteenth century, as maritime commerce boosted settlement within the Tar-Pamlico's relatively stable political climate. The Civil War far outweighed any other settlement influence in the late nineteenth century, and the number of newly built vessels plummeted. With Reconstruction and its aftermath came another inverse shift in influence as economy and commerce drove community development. The final transformation in this scale came as technological change forced the permanent degeneration of Tar-Pamlico maritime commerce and shipbuilding.

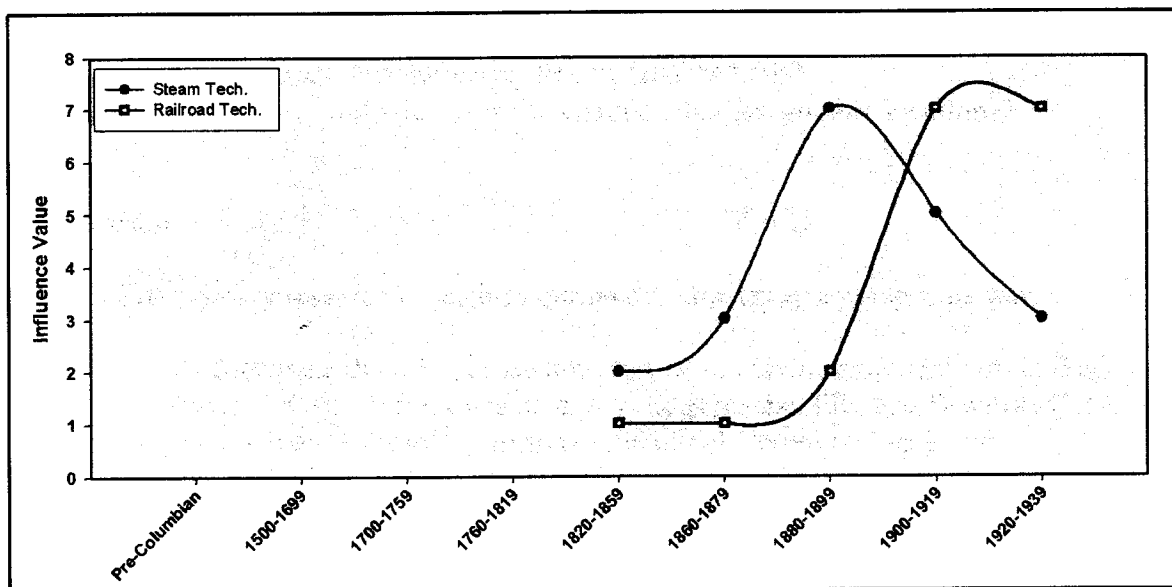
Table 13: Dynamic Settlement Scale showing the inverse relationship between Tar-Pamlico Political Affairs and Shipbuilding.⁵³



⁵³ Graphic generated by author using SigmaPlot 8.0, SYSTAT Software Inc., Chicago, IL.

Another interesting DSS association is the combination of parallel and inverse representations denoted by Tar-Pamlico “Maritime Steam” and “Railroad” technologies (Figure 14). This relationship is noteworthy, but relatively straightforward, as both technologies had considerable impact upon Tar-Pamlico settlement practices. The dominance of rail, no doubt meant the decline of maritime steam, yet the principal meaning here is the notably brief, but powerfully consequential, period of steamboat dominance and its impact upon Tar-Pamlico River communities.

Table 14: Dynamic Settlement Scale showing both the parallel and inverse relationships between Tar-Pamlico Maritime Steam and Railroad Technologies.⁵⁴



As previously stated, additional analysis and application of the Dynamic Settlement Scale will ascertain its validity. An accurate level of the scale's worth as a probability model will only come when similar variables (and sub-variables) are measured against data from other commercial river systems. Potential applications for the scale include independent settlement models from regional, domestic, and

⁵⁴ Graphic generated by author using SigmaPlot 8.0, SYSTAT Software Inc., Chicago, IL.

international geographic locations.⁵⁵ If the results generate original information and also pose innovative research questions, then the process should continue to its full potential. The purpose of the scale is to visualize data and answer questions specific to settlement influences in an effort to simplify an otherwise exceedingly complex cultural process.

Fundamental questions include:

- What elements influence patterns of human settlement?
- Which elements dominate at individual intervals?
- How do they change over time?
- What influences take precedence?
- What are the drivers that change the variables?
- Where are there transitional overlaps?
- What significance do they represent?
- How do the variables rank?
- Are the input data inclusive, fragmented, or both?
- How do the variables measure against other geographic locations?

Conclusion

The primary research objectives outlined in this study's prospectus were:

- To determine the role of maritime commerce upon settlement within the Tar-Pamlico River cultural landscapes of Edgecombe, Pitt, and Beaufort Counties
- To prove or disprove by means of historical, demographical, and archaeological analysis, the hypothesis that Tar-Pamlico River communities were wholly dependant upon maritime activity for their formation and ultimate survival
- To assemble as much relevant information as possible into a collective dataset for eventual comparison with other historical commercial river environments.

The framework for these goals was a series of historical and archaeological research questions ranging from the origins of maritime commerce to potential associations of human settlement with environmental, political, social, economical, and technological

⁵⁵ "Independent" implies separateness while allowing for comparisons of similar or dissimilar traits.

factors. Attempts to achieve each objective took considerably more effort and deliberation than originally anticipated, yet the journey yielded many answers and numerous personal benefits.

The research demonstrates that fluctuating intensities of maritime commerce were critical factors in the development, and in some cases degeneration, of Tar-Pamlico riverside communities. The river corridor was fundamental to nearly every aspect of daily life for countless generations of regional inhabitants. Nevertheless, not all local settlements were exclusively dependant upon maritime commerce for their origins or subsequent survival. Native Americans clearly utilized rivers and streams for transportation and sustenance, but it can be argued that their form of maritime commerce was actually more a social behavior than a precondition of settlement. In contrast, the first European colonists truly required sail technology and shipbuilding to settle and survive in the New World, but as their numbers increased and stabilized, settlement dependency shifted more toward economic and political factors. Clearly, geographic considerations are paramount to location preferences, and emerging North Carolina communities wisely used the natural resources at hand to develop and, in some cases, prosper, but subsequent shifts in transportation technologies away from the river did not doom all existing communities to failure. Geographer Edward Ullman seemed to underscore this point in a 1941 report when he emphasized Walter Christaller's concept

that "one cannot claim that a certain city is where it is because of a certain river – that would be tantamount to saying that if there were no rivers there would be no cities."⁵⁶

Navigability and maritime trade substantially increased the ease and speed of community development, but did not exclusively determine its ultimate success or failure.

From the earliest days of human settlement until relatively recently, inland waterways were vitally important avenues for commercial transportation. Native-Americans, European colonists, slaves, soldiers, sailors, and industrialists all used the Tar-Pamlico River for their own brand of existence and exploitation. Throughout the process, multiple communities formed, flourished, and faded along its commercial corridor. Traveling the river today, it is difficult to imagine the waterway as such a dynamic component of daily life, as it fails to readily reveal much from its unique maritime tradition. Understandably, many local residents know very little about the river's cultural history, but recent historical and archeological studies are helping to highlight its past for future generations to know and appreciate.

Independent researchers have helped document prehistoric sites, historic vessels, captains and crews, marine merchants, wreck and abandonment sites, landings, riverfront communities, families, and other significant maritime elements in an effort to better understand the river's cultural legacy. Even so, more research and documentation are necessary to bring the complementary aspects of maritime commerce and settlement practices together. Local, regional, and international interpretive goals remain elusive,

⁵⁶ Edward Ullman, "A Theory of Location for Cities," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 46, no. 6 (1941): 858.

and still offer significant potential for purposeful investigation. The greatest reward of continuing study is the possibility of generating a comprehensive global dataset that compares, evaluates, and shares known aspects of maritime settlement perspectives in order to support and better understand the conditions of human civilization.

If it be praiseworthy in their descendants to erect monuments in honor of the illustrious dead, and to perpetuate in history the lives and acts of those who gave shape to the past and encouragement to the future, surely it will not be deemed inappropriate to gather up the fragmentary memories of towns once vital and influential within our borders, but now covered with the mantle of decay, without succession, and wholly silent amid the voices of the present.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Charles C. Jones, Jr., "The Dead Towns of Georgia," In *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, Vol. IV (Savannah, GA: Morning News Steam Printing House, 1878), iv.

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