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THE INDIANS OF NORTH
CAROLINA AND THEIR
RELATIONS WITH THE SETTLERS**

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JAMES HALL RAND

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

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James Hall Rand

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THE INDIANS OF NORTH CAROLINA AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE SETTLERS

INTRODUCTION

It is necessary in order to appreciate this study, to turn our thoughts far backward and consider the country that is now North Carolina as it appeared before the coming of the first white men to its shores in 1584.

Towns and cities such as we now have were altogether lacking, nor were there any broad fields. The sound of the factory whistle could not be heard and no highways or railroads intersected the country. No woodman's axe swung against the tall pine and no gun could be had therein to aim at the noble game which bounded away on every side. There was no wheel to utilize the power of the rapid western streams or net to catch the fish which abounded on the eastern coast. There was not a frame house, a metal tool, a book, or a watch within all the limits of what is now North Carolina. Truly, it was the land of no enlightened people.

"Hunter's paradise," "boundless forest," "Lome of wild things" and similar terms would have been very fitting to apply to it. It was indeed all of these. Game abounded there more plentifully than the weary hunter of present time would hope for. It scarcely needed to be sought after and indeed it was necessary to avoid it often, for bears were then more numerous than coons are now, and far easier to encounter. Hunters at a much later date have written of killing more than a hundred bears in a single season. Deer were as plentiful then as rabbits are now. They inhabited every thicket and formed an easy prey to a skillful hunter. Wild turkeys were bold by virtue of their great numbers and the rivers and coast teemed with fish. The smaller sorts of game such as squirrels, rabbits, and quail were plentiful but so very abundant was larger and nobler game that they were not worth the hunter's attention, being merely

sport for children. Lawson gives the names of seventy-five sorts of game which he found in his travels. He and the party which ran the boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina say they saw buffaloes in the far western part of the state.

All of these animals inhabited a vast forest unpathed save by animals and with no highways save the streams. There were noble stately pine, oak, birch, maple, gum, hickory, and other trees in such numbers that the longings of the most ambitious lumberman would have been surpassed. All the whole country indeed was in virgin forest. It was indeed a wild land filled with wild things. The human inhabitants, whom we are now to study, were literally savages. Such was North Carolina in the time of the Indians before the coming of the white man.

I

THE INDIANS OF NORTH CAROLINA

A

DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBES

The most considerable tribe in the eastern part of the state was the tribe of Tuscaroras. This tribe occupied a vast section in what is now the central part of the eastern half of the state. They were of fierce warlike nature and offered the only serious resistance that the settlers encountered in wresting the territory from the Indians. They had the following sixteen important villages: Haruta, Waqni, Contahnah, Anna Oaka, Conaugh-Kare, Harooka, Una Nauhan, Kentanuska, Chunaneeets, Kenta, Eno, Naurheghne, Onossura, Tosneoc, Nanawharitsee, and Nurusurooka. Their fighting population numbered some 1200 men.¹

Around the Tuscaroras, to the east especially, dwelt a number of smaller tribes. Of the Wacoon Indians there were two towns with a fighting force of about 120,² of the Machapungas, one town with a fighting force of about 30, of the Meherrin Indians one town with a fighting force of about 50, of the

¹Lawson.

²All these estimates are taken from Lawson's History.

Chowan Indians one town with a fighting force of about 15, of the Pasquotank Indians one town with a fighting force of 10, of the Core Indians one town with a fighting force of 50, of the Poeskeit Indians one town with a fighting force of 30, of the Hatteras Indians one town with a fighting force of 16, of the Nattaway Indians one with a fighting force of 30 the Caranine Indians two towns with a fighting force of 30, of the Neus Indians one town with a fighting force of 16, and of the Pamptico Indians one town with a fighting force of about 20.

In the southeastern part of the state there were several tribes which lived partly in South Carolina and partly in North Carolina, as these states are today. The Sewee Indians formed a small tribe living on the border. The Santees, the Congerees, the Waterees, and the Chickanees lived also in the southern part of this state and the northern part of South Carolina. All were rather small tribes depopulated on the coming of the whites by rum and smallpox.

In the central part of the state there lived a number of tribes none of which was very large. The Waxhaws were a tribe of large tall Indians living in the southern part of the piedmont section. The Esau and Sugaree Indians had many villages further north. The Kadapau Indians lived further west in a hilly country. The Saponas, Achonechys, Keiauwees, Sissipahaus, and Schoocories lived near each other in a region beyond the Tuscaroras and in the northern central part of the state. They had some two or three hundred fighting men.

The Cherokees and Catawbas were the chief tribes in the western part of the state. Only part of the first of these tribes dwelt in territory that is now a part of North Carolina. The tribe was large and inhabited a large section covering the extreme western part of North Carolina, the extreme eastern part of Tennessee, the northwestern part of South Carolina, and the northern part of Georgia. The settlements in North Carolina did not touch these Indians until 1750 and later, and when they became hostile to the whites their operations were directed chiefly against the South Carolina settlers who gave them cause for grievance. The Catawbas were a considerable tribe slightly east of the Cherokees. They were engaged with the

Cherokees in a war with some western Indians when the Carolina colonists pushed their settlements to their territory about 1750. They, too, gave the Carolina settlers little trouble and acted with the Cherokees in the latter's war with South Carolina.

This sketch doubtless omits some tribes, but the most important are here given and located with a fair degree of accuracy. It is impossible to give any definite estimate of the population of the Indians of North Carolina. At the time the estimates included here were made, which was about 1709, smallpox and rum had already decreased considerably the population in many localities, especially those near the white settlements in the extreme eastern part of the state. I would estimate, from my readings,³ that Indian population within the limits of the present state of North Carolina, before the coming of the first white person to its coast, was about thirty-five thousand.

B

CHARACTERISTICS AND MODE OF LIFE OF INDIANS OF NORTH CAROLINA

The Indians of North Carolina were scarcely excelled, in the shapely form of body, in strength and endurance, in all that goes to make up a physical side of man by any people on earth.

They were well shaped, being clean limbed, free from deformity and inclined to be tall. They always carried themselves very straight unless bent by age. Lawson says he never saw a humpbacked Indian or a dwarf and that cripples were very rare. Their hair and eyes were usually dark, though chestnut hair and brown eyes were not unknown. The men as a rule did not allow hair to grow upon their faces but plucked it all out by the roots.⁴ Their eyes were very good, so much so that they could see much better than an untrained white person. Blindness was practically unknown. The teeth of Indians of both sexes and all tribes were yellow from constant smoking of tobacco. This was the only blemish of body habitually found among them.

³Lawson and general readings.

⁴Lawson.