Notes on the Archaeology of New Hanover County.

By David I. Bushnell, Jr.

It is with no small satisfaction that I have obtained by the courtesy of such eminent authority as that of Mr. David I. Bushnell, jr., of the Bureau of American Ethnology, who is now in Wilmington for investigations on the vanishing race, the following paper; and Mr. Bushnell has quoted from Mr. W. B. McKoy's valuable contributions on the same subject. I also include Dr. Joseph A. Holmes's report upon his personal investigations of the mounds in Duplin County, and a paper by Capt. S. A. Ashe on the Indians of the Lower Cape Fear.

In reference to the Woccon, Saxapahaw, Cape Fear, and Warrennuncock Indians, we find it stated: "Of the North Carolina tribes bearing the foregoing names almost nothing is known, and of the last two even the proper names have not been recorded. The Woccon were Siouan; the Saxapahaw and Cape Fear Indians presumably were Siouan, as indicated from their associations and alliance with known Siouan tribes; while the Warrennuncock were probably some people better known under another name, although they cannot be identified."[1] Unfortunately the identity of the Cape Fear Indians has not been revealed, and it may ever remain a mystery. The name was first bestowed, by the early colonists, upon the Indians whom they found occupying the lands about the mouth of the Cape Fear River, and more especially the peninsula now forming the southern part of New Hanover County. It is also possible the term "Cape Fear Indians" was applied to any Indians found in the vicinity, regardless of their tribal connections, and, as will be shown later, the area was frequented by numbers of different tribes. Although the native people were often mentioned in early writings, it is doubtful whether the Indian population of the peninsula ever exceeded a few hundred.

Evidently Indians continued to occupy the lower part of the peninsula until about the year 1725, at which time, according to a well-substantiated tradition, they were driven from the section. "Roger Moore, because of his wealth and large number of slaves, was called 'King' Roger. There is a tradition on the Cape Fear that he and his slaves had a battle with the Indians at Sugar Loaf, nearly opposite the town of Brunswick. Governor Tryon, forty years later, mentions that the last battle with

[1]Mooney, James. *The Siouan Tribes of the East.* Bulletin Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, 1894, p. 65.

the Indians was when driving them from the Cape Fear in 1725. The tradition would seem to be well founded."[1]

At the present time, nearly two centuries after the expulsion of the last Indian inhabitants from the peninsula, we find many traces of their early occupancy of the area. Oysters and other mollusks served as important articles of food, and vast quantities of shells, intermingled with numerous fragments of pottery of Indian make, are encountered along the mainland, facing the sounds. These masses of shells do not necessarily indicate the sites of villages, or of permanent settlements, but rather of places visited at different times by various families or persons for the purpose of gathering oysters, clams, etc. The majority of these were probably consumed on the spot, while others, following the custom of the more northern tribes, may have been dried in the smoke of the wigwam and thus preserved for future use.

The many small pieces of pottery found, mingled with the shells, are pieces of vessels, probably cooking utensils, of the Indians. Many pieces bear on their outer or convex surfaces the imprint of twisted cords; other fragments show the impressions of basketry. In a paper read before the Historical and Scientific Society, June 3, 1878, Mr. W. B. McKoy described this stage of pottery-making, after the clay had been properly prepared: "The mortar is then pressed by the hand on the inside of a hastily constructed basket of wickerwork and allowed to dry for a while; the basket is then inverted over a large fire of pitch pine and the pot is gradually hardened and blackened by the smoke, having the appearance of a thick iron pot. By constant use afterwards the particles of carbon that have entered the pores of the clay are burnt out and then the pot has a red appearance."[2] Fragments occur upon which the designs are characteristic of pottery from the interior and farther south; other pieces are undoubtedly the work of the southern Algonquin tribes. Within a radius of about one hundred miles were tribes of the Algonquin, Siouan, and Iroquoian stocks. Small parties of the different tribes were ever moving from place to place, and it is within reason to suppose that members of the various tribes, from time to time, visited the Cape Fear peninsula; thus explaining the presence of the variety of pottery discovered among the shell-heaps on the shore of the sound.

[1]Ashe, S. A. *History of North Carolina.* Greensboro, 1908. Vol. 1, p. 213.

[2]Published in the *Daily Review*, Wilmington, July 6, 1878.