

THE HISTORY OF BEAR ISLAND

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## INTRODUCTION

Bear Island is an 892 acre barrier island in North Carolina. First known to European settlers as Bare Banks because of its lack of vegetation, Bear Island has been witness to a long but sparse history. Originally inhabited by native Americans who harvested sea turtles there during the summer months, Bear Island has undergone a cultural evolution from the persecution of native Americans by English settlers, through the struggle for minority rights, finally to the protection of sea turtles.

## BEAR ISLAND DURING PREHISTORY

### Introduction

The pre-history of Bear Island spans a period of approximately 3700 years from the island's creation about 4000 years ago, as a result of a 90 foot drop in ocean levels, until 1713, when the Tuscaroran Indian Wars ended. Although exact dating of the first arrival of humans to Bear Island is impossible, it is likely that the island became subject to periodic habitation by native Americans shortly after its creation around 4000 B.C.<sup>1</sup> The prehistory of Bear Island is divided into two periods: the Archaic period and the Woodland period. The Woodland period is distinguished from the Archaic period by the invention of pottery, and the advent of agriculture.

The Archaic Period

There is scarce but definite evidence that Bear Island was visited on at least on an occasional basis during the Archaic period.<sup>2</sup> Because of the lack of a reliable source of fresh water on the island and the lack of ceramic vessels to import water in, it is likely that Bear Island was never permanently, or even seasonally inhabited during this period. Rather, bands of hunter-gatherers probably came to the island for short periods to hunt small game and collect shellfish before returning to the mainland.

Very little is known about the cultural practices of native Americans during this period, but archaeological evidence from related cultures on the mainland offers a few clues to the social practices of the island's first inhabitants. Because burial sites from this period tend to be very simple, it is unlikely that Archaic cultures practiced any organized form of religion. Institutionalized religions in native American cultures are generally evidenced by the presence of elaborate burial sites. Also, it is likely that Bear Island's Archaic period inhabitants lacked any formal social structure. Like the primitive hunter-gatherers on other continents, group decisions were probably made by a roughly democratic process of debate and consensus.<sup>3</sup> In short, though we know very little about the

inhabitants of Bear Island during this period, there is probably isn't much to know about them.

**The Woodland Period**

About 1000 years before the birth of Christ, two technological innovations in native American culture occurred that greatly enhanced the ability of native Americans to exploit the rich resources of Bear Island. These innovations were the invention of pottery and the invention of the dugout canoe. The canoe, constructed by hollowing out the trunks of cypress trees with fire and stone adzes, provided a convenient means of transportation to and from the island. Before this invention, wandering bands could only reach Bear Island by wading or paddling on logs. The invention of pottery made it possible to stay on the island for longer periods by providing a means for visitors to bring a supply of fresh water with them, and it allowed them to carry more food back to the mainland with them when they left.<sup>4</sup>

There was probably no agriculture on Bear Island during the Woodland period, and though this idea cannot be substantiated, Bear Island's current unsuitability for agriculture lends considerable credence to this conjecture. Further, the abundance of shellfish, sea turtles, and other

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easily gathered forms of seafood on Bear Island would have obviated any need for agriculture.

There is significant archaeological evidence of seasonal occupation of Bear Island during the Woodland period. Potsherds, arrowheads, and oyster middens have been found at several locations on the island to substantiate this claim. Interestingly, in addition to these artifacts, kaolin pipe-stems of native American design have been found on the island, indicating the use of tobacco by Bear Islanders, and pointing to the notion that the inhabitants of the island were involved in trade with inland tribes. The presence of arrowheads made from jasper, a type of stone only found west of the coastal plain, also points to the notion of a thriving trade between coastal and inland tribes.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike their Archaic period predecessors, the inhabitants of Bear Island during the Woodland period probably practiced some organized form of religion, and it is also likely that they had an organized social structure somewhat akin to the tribal system noted by English settlers in the 1600's.<sup>6</sup> The development of these social institutions was a direct result of the technological innovations which made Bear Island accessible in the first place--pottery and the canoe. Pottery did much more than allow native Americans to store water; it also allowed them

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to gather and store a surplus of food. The advent of such surplusses created the need for a centralized system for controlling and distributing these surplusses, which evolved into tribal government. Anthropologists believe that organized religion was the vehicle by which tribal governmental systems legitimized themselves.<sup>7</sup> In other words, religion was developed in direct response to the advent of resource surplusses. Government was needed to insure the fair distribution of tribal property, and religion was needed to give the government the authority to execute its task.<sup>8</sup>

Bear Island lies on the border of three major ethnolinguistic regions: the Algonquian, the Siouan and the Iroquoian. Of the two tribes known to have inhabited Bear Island, the Neusiok Indians were speakers of an Algonquian dialect<sup>9</sup>, and the Coree Indians were speakers of a Siouxan dialect. Whether any Iroquoians ever visited Bear Island is unknown.

### BEAR ISLAND DURING EUROPEAN EXPANSION

#### Introduction

There was very little contact between the native Americans on Bear Island and European colonists. Except for the unexplainable presence of two kaolin pipestems of

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English origin dating from the late 1500's found on the island<sup>10</sup>, there is no evidence of significant European involvement with Bear Island before the Tuscaroran Indian wars, and no evidence of native American involvement with the island thereafter. Both the Neusiok and the Coree fought against the English in the Tuscaroran Indian Wars, and both were soundly defeated and forced to retreat northward to areas under Iroquois rule. Thus by 1713, when Bear Island was first officially recognized as part of North Carolina, there were no longer any native Americans there.

### Tobias Knight and the Legend of Blackbeard

Bear Island's first European owner was Tobias Knight, a wealthy colonist and governmental official, who acquired the island in 1713.<sup>11</sup> A close friend and associate of colonial governor Charles Eden, Knight is not known to have ever visited Bear Island. Tobias Knight held many posts within the colonial North Carolina government. He acted as collector of the port of Bath, Vice Admiralty judge, and Secretary General to Governor Eden. These posts gave Knight ample opportunity to profit through conspiracy with pirates, and in the case of Blackbeard (Edward Teach), this is exactly what Knight did.

Although this point cannot be verified, local legend holds that Tobias Knight allowed Blackbeard to use Bear

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Island as a hideout in return for a share of the captured goods. There is no written record of such a deal between the two men. There is, however, a written record of a conspiracy between Blackbeard and Knight, and Charles Eden is also strongly implicated in these documents. After settling in Bath, North Carolina, Blackbeard returned from Charles Town in 1718 with a French merchant ship which he claimed to have found abandoned. Knight, acting as collector of the port and vice admiralty judge, condemned the merchant ship as a legitimate prize, and summarily awarded the ship and its load of sugar and merchandise to Blackbeard. Shortly thereafter, Blackbeard unloaded the ship, beached it a few miles outside of Bath, and burned it. Later, after an investigation into the incident had been initiated by Governor Spottswood of Virginia, a large portion of the merchant ship's cargo was discovered in Tobias Knight's barn. Further, as the most damning of the evidence against Knight, after Blackbeard's death in a sea battle, a letter from Knight warning of Spottswood's investigation was found in Blackbeard's possession.<sup>12</sup> This letter also implied that Eden had profited through conspiring with Blackbeard.

This evidence against Knight and Eden was legitimized by the testimony given by one of Blackbeard's men, Basilica Hands. Hands not only verified that Blackbeard's



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acquisition of the French merchant vessel had been as a result of piracy, he also verified that both Knight and Eden had shared in merchandise taken from it.<sup>13</sup>

Knight was tried May 27, 1719 for conspiracy with Blackbeard, but the trial was held in North Carolina under the auspices of Eden. When the evidence was proffered against Knight, he responded by claiming that all his actions were taken under orders from Eden, and Knight was acquitted. As a result of the scandal, however, Eden forced Knight to resign his government posts shortly after the trial in order to save face himself. Eden's pardoning of Blackbeard in 1718, however, and his efforts to pardon him again in 1719, however, caused his government to lose a great deal of prestige, and Eden and Knight gained an unshakable reputation for corruption.

### Bear Island in the 18th Century

After about 1720, it appeared that the North Carolina coast had finally shaken its piracy problem, and for about twenty years, Bear Island, Bogue Inlet and Bear Inlet were free of raids. During this period, Bear Island became part of the newly formed Onslow County (1735). Until this time, Bear Island and the entire White Oak River basin had been part of New Hanover County.<sup>14</sup> Just six years after the creation of Onslow, however, piracy returned to the area,

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this time in the form of Spanish privateers preying on English merchant ships. In 1741, six years before the "Spanish Alarm" had fully gotten under way, an English merchant vessel was attacked by Spanish privateers off Bogue Inlet. The captain and crew of the merchant ship were only barely able to escape with their lives, and the ship was lost to the Spanish<sup>15</sup>.

Beginning around 1747, the Spanish Navy and privateers made a series of attacks on the North Carolina coast, including at least two attacks on Bear Island. These attacks were known to North Carolinians as the Spanish Alarm. In the first of these attacks, several sloops and barcalarjos attacked Bear Island, Ocracoke Island, Core banks and Cape Fear. Designed primarily to harrass English settlements, these attacks did little actual damage. The Spanish were able to burn a few English ships in the region, and to capture some slaves, but the only significant result of these raids was to bolster the English resolve to hold the island.<sup>16</sup>

Raids on the North Carolina coast continued on a more or less regular schedule for approximately two years. On January 26, 1748, two Spanish privateers captured an English schooner off Bear Inlet. The schooner, called the Sarah, however, had no provisions on board, and when the Spanish boarded her for return to St. Augustine, they were forced

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out of impending starvation to surrender to English authorities at Brunswick Town.<sup>17</sup>

To protect English interests from the Spanish raids, a series of small forts were placed near important inlets along the North Carolina coast. During the colonial period of North Carolina, Bear and Bogue Inlets were both commercially important routes from the mainland to the Atlantic Ocean. They served as the primary exit point for ships exporting naval stores, lumber and agricultural products from Onslow county.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, one of the planned forts was designated to be placed on the Bear Inlet side of Bear Island. Different sources place the value of this fort at 100 pounds sterling, 300 pounds sterling, and 307 pounds sterling. The last of these estimates has the best chance of being correct.<sup>19</sup> Though none of the extant records reveal the armament of the fort or its manpower requirements, the cost of the fort throws doubt on its defensive capabilities. The fort may have been attacked by the Spanish in 1749, but this cannot be verified.

The fort's position on the island is no longer known. Tucker Littleton of the Onslow County Historical Society discovered some bricks near the Southwest end of the island, but it could never be determined whether or not these bricks were originally part of the fort.<sup>20</sup> There are no above ground remains of the fort on the island.

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From the 1750's into the 1800's, Bear Island was part of a plantation owned by the Starkey family. John Starkey, the first of the Starkeys to own the island, was the first representative for Onslow County in the Colonial Assembly, where he served for 31 years. In 1750 he was appointed Treasurer of the Southern District of north Carolina.<sup>21</sup> John Starkey was known as a populist and worked on behalf of North Carolina colonists who were by this time beginning to chafe against the restrictive import and export laws enforced by the English Court through the colonial government.

John Starkey's son, Edward Starkey, was also a prominent local official. He was a delegate to the first Provincial Congress in America at New Bern in 1775, and was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons in 1778. In 1783 he became the Speaker of the House of Commons, and in 1784 he became a Commissioner of Navigation, serving Bogue Inlet.<sup>22</sup>

### Bear Island in the 19th Century

Early in the 1800's, Daniel Heady, a ship captain from Core Banks, acquired Bear Island.<sup>23</sup> Heady built a house and a whale processing station on the northeastern tip of the island, which remained in operation until the Civil War. Heady's crew did not engage in whaling, but rather took

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advantage of whales and porpoises that beached themselves near the processing station. Apparently, whale beachings in the early 1800's were fairly common, because Heady's processing station was only one of many like it along the Atlantic coast.<sup>24</sup> Also, Heady's crew actively hunted porpoises off the beach. After sighting a school, the four boats would surround the porpoises, fire 200 yard nets around the school in a roughly U-shaped formation, and then lash the nets together into a semi-circle. Then, with two boats at each end of the combined 800 yard seine, the crew would drag the net, with porpoises inside, ashore.<sup>25</sup> Catching porpoises by this method, however, was both dangerous and costly, and it was only practiced when whale beachings were scarce.

Bear Island remained in the Heady family for four generations, and the island became known during this time as Heady's beach.<sup>26</sup> The remains of the Heady family house, and the whaling station are still visible on the northeast side of the island, though most of the remains are now under water. The family graveyard, which was placed in close proximity to the house, began eroding into Bogue Inlet during the 1970's, and several human bones were found in the area. Some of these bodies were moved from the island for reinterment on the mainland, but several apparently washed into the sea.<sup>27</sup>

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During the Heady Family tenure on Bear Island, Bogue Inlet replaced Bear Inlet as the most import route from Onslow County's interior to the Atlantic Ocean because of its proximity to the mouth of the White Oak River and Swansboro. Bogue Inlet was a very dangerous inlet, however, because of the constantly shifting shoals on either side of the channel. During the 1840's alone, at least three ships were wrecked on the Bogue Inlet side of Bear island. In March of 1841, the schooner Napoleon sunk in Bogue Sound near the northeast tip of Bear Island. In 1846, the schooner Friendship sunk in the middle of Bogue Inlet. And in April 1846, the schooner Colonel Hanson ran aground on the northeast side of Bear Island while trying to navigate Bogue Inlet and was battered to pieces by rough seas.<sup>28</sup>

### Bear Island During the Civil War

Bear Island played only a small role in the American Civil War. For a time in 1862 Bear Island and Bogue Inlet marked the boundary between Confederate forces based in Wilmington and Jacksonville and Union forces who had occupied Bogue Banks and New Bern. To protect this boundary, the Confederate Army built a six gun fort on Huggins Island in Bogue Inlet, and placed pickets on Bear Island to prevent a Union landing there. The Huggins Island fort was abandoned and burned in 1862 by Confederate forces,

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and maintenance of the pickets on Bear Island was abandoned.

In 1864, the Civil War returned to Bear Island. In March of that year a Union gunboat entered Bear Inlet, where it captured and burned a confederate freighter loaded with salt and leather. Then, on another mission in the same year, Union forces landed on Bear Island and rescued a band of 43 escaped slaves who had been hiding out on the island.<sup>29</sup>

### BEAR ISLAND DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

For most of the 20th Century, the history of Bear Island was bound to the history of Dr. William Sharpe and his family. Dr. Sharpe, one of the pioneers of modern neurosurgery, bought Bear Island after falling in love with the region on a visit to the Onslow Rod and Gun Club in 1914. Dr. Sharpe, who made his home in New York City, bought a 4,600 acre tract on the Swansboro side of the White Oak River, including both Bear Island and the mainland properties of what is now Hammocks Beach State Park. Dr. Sharpe bought the land to be used for a hunting and fishing preserve, and he hired John Hurst, a local black man, to manage the property for him. The hiring of Hurst to manage such a large property angered many local whites, who were

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still feeling the effects of the Civil War. For a wealthy Northerner to come to the economically depressed South, buy a huge tract of land for recreational purposes, and hire a black man to manage it was considered scandalous.<sup>30</sup>

Fortunately, no action was taken by local whites against either the Sharpe family or the Hurst family, but there was apparently considerable resentment which lasted into the 1960's.<sup>31</sup>

For most of the time that the Sharpe family owned it, Bear Island was the scene of nothing more than hunting and fishing. One exception to this peaceful existence was World War II. Just prior to the war, U.S. Marines based in Jacksonville used Bear Island as a practice site for amphibious invasions. Many of these practice invasions involved the use of live artillery<sup>32</sup>. Also, during the war, a U.S. Coast Guard Observation station was erected on the island to spot German submarines that were attempting to strangle the shipment of American supplies to England. Several of these observation stations were built along the Atlantic Coast, and they consisted of little more than an observation tower and a small barracks for the staff. Apparently, no submarines were ever spotted from the station, and it was closed shortly after the war ended<sup>33</sup>. The only other incident worthy of note during this time was a large forest fire which occurred in 1945. The cause of



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the fire was never discovered, but it destroyed a significant amount of maritime forest in the central interior of the island. As the sand sheet shifts on the island, the charred remains of burned trees from this fire occasionally surface.

After World War II, Dr. Sharpe offered to leave his estate, including Bear Island, to John and Gertrude Hurst in his will in return for the Hurst's service to the Sharpe family. Mrs. Hurst, who was a school teacher, however, suggested that the land should instead be given to the North Carolina Teachers Association, a non-profit group comprised of black educators.<sup>34</sup> At this time, all recreation sites, including beaches, were racially segregated, and there was no beach specified for use by blacks. Granting the Sharpe property to the NCTA would remedy this situation. The Sharpe's agreed with the Hurst's that the use of the property for recreational and educational purposes by blacks was a good idea, and the property was transferred in 1950.<sup>35</sup>

To administer the property, the NCTA created the Hammocks Beach Corporation, the board of which was composed of Dr. and Mrs. Sharpe and 24 prominent black educators.<sup>36</sup> And while the purpose of the corporation was to provide recreational and educational opportunities to all black North Carolinians, it established formal relationships with

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churches, agricultural groups and several youth organizations such as 4-H, the YMCA and the YWCA.<sup>37</sup> The corporation, in cooperation with these groups, began in 1950 to raise money to develop facilities both on the mainland and the island to make the property useful for conventions, retreats and field trips. Several structures were built on the mainland tract, and the Hammocks Beach Corporation was largely successful in its attempt to provide recreational and educational opportunities for blacks, but because of the relative inaccessibility of Bear Island, they were never able to fully take advantage of the Sharpe's gift. Attempts to raise money to build a bridge from the mainland to Bear Island yielded over \$100,000 (collected mostly from teachers), but it quickly became apparent that the corporation would never be able to raise the \$1.3 million it would take to build a bridge.

On several occasions, the Hammocks Beach Corporation tried to persuade federal and state officials to provide either a bridge or a canal to Bear Island, but none of these attempts met with any success. And because part of the deed agreement between the Sharpe family and the corporation directed that the corporation would have to return the land to the Sharpe family if it failed to make use of the island, the corporation entered into negotiations with the state in 1956 to make a state park out of Bear Island. The

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corporation's original offer to the state included provisions to deed all of Bear Island and a 1.75 acre mainland tract to the state on the condition that the state build and maintain a bridge to the park, and allow all concessions on the island to be run by the corporation. The state, while interested in obtaining the land for a state park, was nevertheless unwilling to accept the land on these terms. After further meetings with representatives of the state, the corporation again offered the tracts to the state in return for the construction and maintenance of a ferry channel and the concession rights. Again, the state refused. While it is clear that the state refused to take the land on these terms because of an established practice of not giving concession contracts to private corporations, it is unclear why the Hammocks Beach Corporation would offer the land to the state on these terms in the first place. As has already been noted, the corporation had by this time raised over \$100,000 toward increasing the accessibility of Bear Island. According state documents, the cost of constructing a ferry channel from the mainland and purchasing a ferry would have cost the corporation less than \$80,00.<sup>38</sup>

For whatever reasons, however, the Hammocks Beach Corporation entered into negotiations with the state for a third time in 1958, and in return for merely the

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construction of a ferry channel and a promise to provide access to the island, the corporation resolved to donate the tracts to the state. Based on a verbal agreement between state officials and the board of the Hammocks Beach Corporation to turn over all rights to the land "free and clear", the state appropriated over \$300,000 for the creation of Hammocks Beach State Park.<sup>39</sup> With this agreement in hand, the transferral of ownership from the corporation to the state should have been a straight-forward affair. It turned out to be quite involved.

Although the state had appropriated money for the creation of a state park on Bear Island, none of that money could actually be spent until the land had been officially transferred to state ownership. But to provide the state with the "free and clear" ownership that it required, a friendly condemnation of the deed between the Sharpes and the Hammocks Beach Corporation was necessary, because of the complexity of the provisions within it. Unfortunately for everyone involved, in 1958, before the condemnation could be performed, Dr. Sharpe was seriously injured, and sustained a prolonged illness. During this time the legal duties surrounding the condemnation of the deed fell to Mrs. Sharpe, who had been absent during the corporation's negotiations with the state. Acting out of St. Petersburg, Florida, Mrs. Sharpe was unaware of the concessions to the

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state made by her husband, and refused to go through with the condemnation. Her refusal to cooperate cost the state a considerable amount of money, and held up the opening of the park by over two years. During this period, 1958 and 1959, the state and the Hammocks Beach Corporation tried innumerable times to cajole Mrs. Sharpe into cooperating. At one point the state's Attorney General, Malcolm Seawell, even suggested attempting an adverse condemnation of the deed against the wishes of Mrs. Sharpe in order to recoup the state's losses.<sup>40</sup> In a letter to Carl Venters, Seawell put the state's problem succinctly.

I am suggesting.....that the Board of Conservation and Development request the Governor and Council of State to authorize the adverse condemnation of the Bear Island property. I am requesting this resolution in view of Mrs. Sharpe's last letter indicating to me that we cannot expect more cooperation from her within the foreseeable future and since the State has already spent a good deal of money improving the property, we should either mark off the money as a bad investment or proceed to condemn the property.<sup>41</sup>

On Ventner's advice, state negotiators decided to be patient with Mrs. Sharpe, and in 1960 their patience was rewarded. Shortly after Dr. Sharpe's death, Mrs. Sharpe sent a letter to Dr. Rudolph Jones (the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Hammocks Beach corporation) claiming that she would not sign the condemnation papers. Before he could reply, however, Mrs. Sharpe sent Dr. Jones a telegram claiming that

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she would sign the papers as soon as she received them.<sup>42</sup>

Though state officials realized that Dr. Sharpe's death entailed the termination of Mrs. Sharpe's power of attorney and thus that she no longer had the legal capability to condemn the deed, they nevertheless prepared the paperwork as quickly as possible and sent it to Mrs. Sharpe.

According to North Carolina law, Dr. Sharpe's interest in the Bear Island property should have been disbursed according to his will, but the state had been trying to get Mrs. Sharpe's cooperation on this issue for so long, that when they finally got it, they refused to let it slip through their fingers. In a memorandum to Carl Ventners, Thomas Morse writes:

Mr. Saunders and I also discussed the question of whether or not Dr. Sharpe had left a will, since, if he did not, his children would have an interest in the property. we decided however to send the papers on to Mrs. Sharpe to sign so that we would have her signature. The question of whether or not Dr. Sharpe had left a will will be taken up with Mrs. Sharpe after she has signed the papers. It seemed best not to delay securing Mrs. Sharpe's signature now that she has finally agreed to sign.....Any delay in getting the papers to her might cause her to change her mind again.<sup>43</sup>

In the end of course, there was a delay, and it very nearly caused Mrs. Sharpe to change her mind. In a brief note to Rudolph Jones, Mrs Sharpe wrote:

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Sorry Mr. Ventners did not get the papers to me in time for me to sign. you see Mr. Jones this is the sort of thing that seems unnecessary to me. After all, you people have pressed me especially the last year to do something about having the papers signed!.....I was ready--however, I am leaving by train in an hour, and do not know how long I shall be detained in new York nor do I know where I shall be.....This has been quite a disappointment to me, not to have been able to get things started, as you all seemed so concerned for my signature.....You can't say I didn't try.<sup>44</sup>

Eventually, state officials were able to track down Mrs. Sharpe, and she did sign the friendly condemnation papers, but by this time Dr. Sharpe's children had entered the fray, wanting to make sure that they weren't being relieved of any property that was legally theirs. After a series of negotiations with William Sharpe, Jr., the state was able to convince Dr. Sharpe's heirs that the friendly condemnation of the deed between Dr. Sharpe and the Hammocks Beach Corporation did not infringe on any of their rights, and the condemnation was allowed to stand.

### Hammocks Beach State Park

It took the state of North Carolina a lot of time, effort and money to procure Bear Island, but even so, the acquisition of a completely undeveloped barrier island was quite a bargain. Hammocks Beach State Park, the state's first and only park for blacks, was opened in 1961<sup>45</sup>, thereby finally fulfilling the goals set forth in the

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charter of the Hammocks Beach Corporation. Though it had to give up all rights to the island in the process, the corporation managed, after eleven years of effort, to create a facility for the exclusive recreational and educational use of black people. Amazingly, almost as soon as the Black community had achieved exclusive use of the island, a federal law took it away from them. Even more amazingly, the law that did it was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which mandated the end of all racially based segregation in public places. This law, designed primarily to provide greater opportunities for black people, had in this case the opposite result. Instead of opening Bear Island to blacks, the Civil Rights Act opened it to whites. Also, because the Civil Rights Act opened other beaches to blacks, it made the donation of Bear Island to the state unnecessary as a means of providing blacks with recreational opportunities.

Nevertheless, Hammocks Beach State Park became known in the 1960's as a Black Beach, and when the channel was cut from the Intercoastal Waterway to Bear Island by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, it earned the local appellation "Nigger Cut".<sup>46</sup> Gradually though, as racial tensions in the area have decreased, Hammocks Beach State Park has slowly lost its reputation as a Black Beach, and Bear Island has lost many of its more colorful nicknames.



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As Bear Island began to disassociate itself with one minority, however, it began an association with another another one: the loggerhead turtle. In 1973, when the United States government passed the Endangered Species Act, loggerhead turtle populations had been in decline for several years.<sup>47</sup> This act was designed to prevent the extinction of imperiled animals and plants and create a national program to conserve endangered wildlife throughout the world. Under this law, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was granted broad powers to protect all forms of wildlife determined to be in jeopardy of extinction. The Secretary of Commerce, acting through the National Marine Fisheries Service, was granted similar authority for protecting marine life.<sup>48</sup>

One of the provisions of the Endangered Species Act is the mandate to protect critical habitats--the areas of land, water, and air space that an endangered or threatened species needs for survival. Such areas include breeding sites, cover and shelter, and sufficient habitat space to allow for normal population growth and behavior. This provision therefore precludes the development of habitat areas which could adversely affect the region's ability to support endangered species. Bear Island, as one of the last unlighted islands on the North Carolina coast, meets the definition of a critical habitat for the loggerhead turtle.

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Though the loggerhead was not classified as threatened until 1978, studies of their nesting behaviour and habitat needs were begun on Bear Island as early as 1975.<sup>49</sup> Since then, Bear Island has become an increasingly important part of the fight to save the loggerhead, and has been designated as a critical habitat area for the species.

END NOTES

1. Onslow County Archaeological Assessment, p. 43.
2. An arrowhead of archaic origin is documented in the Onslow County Archaeological Assessment as being found near the western end of the island at 310n85. Another archaic point is documented in the report as being found at 310n100. pp. 43-44.
3. Barbour, Phillip L., "Indiand and Englisghmen as Themselves: Notes For an Inquiry into Basic Biases", Papers of the Ninth Algonquian Conference, p. 74.
4. Flannery, Regina; An Analysis of Coastal Algonquian Culture, pp. 1-36.
5. Onslow County Archaeological Assessment, pp. 43-44.
6. Evidence for the practice of organized religion on Bear Island during the Woodland period is found in a letter from Dr. William Sharpe to Ms. Eleanor Swinson dated July 20, 1982. In this letter, Sharpe relates the story of the accidental discovery of a mass Indian grave site during the construction of a house on the interior of the island. In addition to eight bodies which had apparently been carefully placed on their sides in a fetal position, various other items of ceramic and stone were found in the grave. Because there were no archaeologists or anthropologists available to study the site, the bodies were simply moved to the mainland and reinterred. The existence of a decorated grave site, however, does point strongly toward the idea that the native Americans of this period did practice some form of organized religion.
7. Flannery, Regina; An Analysis of Coastal Algonquian Culture, pp. 38-50.
8. *ibid.*
9. The Neusiok had a village at the mouth of the White Oak River called Marasanico. It is possible that many of the artifacts found on Bear Island result from seasonal food-gathering visits by the inhabitants of this village.

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10. According to the Onslow County Archaeological Assessment, there is limited archaeological evidence of English visits to Bear Island during the 16th and 17th centuries. An English pipestem fragment was found on the Southwest end of the island near a native American lithic manufacturing site made of kaolin clay. The diameter of the bore of the fragment measures 9/64 inches. This bore diameter dates the pipestem's manufacture between 1590 and 1620. There is, however, some question concerning the reliability of this dating, because it is impossible to determine what part of the pipestem the fragment comes from. If the fragment came from a part of the stem near the bowl, then the hypothesized date of manufacture is probably wrong. If, on the other hand, the dating is correct, then the English were present on Bear Island long before any extant records indicate. This pipestem fragment was found at 310n85.

The other pipestem fragment, found at 310n97, has the same bore diameter (9/64 inches) as the fragment found at 310n85. This reduces the chance that the dating of the fragments is incorrect, and points to limited English involvement on Bear Island in the late 1500's and early 1600's.

There is also scant evidence suggesting that Spanish traders occasionally made raids on Bear Island to capture slaves for use in the Caribbean.

11. Angley, Wilson, An Historical Overview of Bogue Inlet, p. 8.

12. Letters of Governor Spottswood, Volume II, p. 318.

13. Hughson, Shirley Carter, The Carolina Pirates and Colonial Commerce, 1670-1740, pp. 74-75.

14. Angley, Wilson--Historical Overview of Bogue Inlet, p. 6.

15. South Carolina Gazette--October 27, 1741. Also in Angley, Wilson--Historical Overview of Bogue Inlet.

16. From a letter from colonial governor Gabriel Johnson to the Royal Secretary of King Charles, 1748.

17. Colonial Records of North Carolina Vol II, p. 342. Also related in Fuller.

18. Angley, Wilson; An Historical Overview of Bogue Inlet, pp. 1-2.

19. Kirk Fuller, in an unreferenced report, places the value of the fort at 300 pounds. The Onslow County Archaeological Assessment report places the value of the fort at 100 pounds. This is also unreferenced. The most reliable estimate of the

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cost of this fort comes from a series of colonial documents implying that the fort cost approximately 307 pounds. Colonial Records, Volume V, pp. 796, 965, 1097, 1101; Volume VI, pp. 121, 143, 144, 204.

20. Onslow County Archaeological Assessment, p. 44. The site of the find was 310n84.

21. Colonial Records, Volume VI, pp. 470, 503.

22. Corbitt, D.L., "Historical Notes":, North Carolina Historical Review, Volume III, Number 1, January, 1926; pp. 13-14.

23. Simpson, Marcus B. and Sallie W. Simpson; North Carolina Historical Review; Volume LXV, Number 1, January 1988, p. 26.

24. Simpson, pp. 25-29.

25. Simpson, pp. 25-26.

26. Fuller, p. 6.

27. Onslow County Archaeological Assessment, p. 47.

28. N.C. Department of Conservation and Development, An Oceanographic Atlas.

29. Fuller, p. 7.

30. William Sharpe, in a letter to Ms. Eleanor Swinson, July 20, 1982.

31. William Sharpe, letter, July 20, 1982.

32. William Sharpe, July 20, 1982.

33. U.S. Coast Guard, unpublished document, undated. Also mentioned briefly in the correspondences of William Sharpe.

34. North Carolina Teachers Association, unpublished documents. The North Carolina Teachers Association is referred to in some documents as the North Carolina Black Teachers Association, or NCBTA.

35. Hammocks Beach Corporation, unpublished documents.

36. Including the presidents of the eleven four year negro colleges, the president of the NCTA, the secretary of the NCTA, the presidents of the four districts of the NCTA, the State

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Supervisor of Negro Elementary Schools, two randomly chosen female teachers from negro elementary schools, two negro citizens of North Carolina, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Director of the Division of Negro Education in the Department of Public Instruction. (Hammocks Beach Corporation, unpublished, undated document)

37. Also, the New Farmers of America, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the State Congress of Negro Parents and Teachers, the State Medical Association, the State Inter-Denominational Alliance, the State Nurses' Association, the State Bar Association, and the U.S. Agricultural Extension Service. (from unpublished documents; Hammocks Beach Corporation)

38. One possible, but unverifiable reason for the Hammocks Beach Corporation's desire to donate the island to the state may concern the issue of property taxes. When the corporation first began negotiating with the state, corporation lands had never been surveyed and had an appraised tax value of only \$28,000. The taxes paid by the corporation amounted to only \$370 per year. As the first round of negotiations brought Bear Island under the scrutiny of state officials, however, it soon became apparent the land's actual worth was far greater than its appraised value, and a re-appraisal was suggested by the then Attorney General Malcolm Seawell. Had such an appraisal occurred, it would have undoubtedly led to a sharp rise in property taxes owed by the Hammocks Beach Corporation. The possible threat of this increased liability may have forced the corporations hand, but this is sheer speculation.

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39. *ibid.*

40. Letter from Malcolm Seawell to Thomas W. Morse, Superintendent of State Parks; September 4, 1959.

41. Letter from Malcolm Seawell to Carl V. Ventners; September 4, 1959.

42. Morse, Thomas W. in a memorandum to Carl Ventners.

43. *ibid.*

44. Letter from Mrs. Josephine Sharpe to Dr. Rudolph Jones; undated.

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45. United States Congress, 89th Congress, 2nd Session. House Document, Number 480, pp. 14-18.

46. This is according to local inhabitants. The official name of the waterway is "Cow Channel". It is worthy of note that what is now called Cow Channel is not in fact the same waterway as the original Cow Channel, which lies approximately 1/2 mile to the southwest of the current channel. The original cow channel was so named because local cattlemen used it to swim cattle to Bear Island to graze in the shrub thicket in the interior of the island. This practice had ceased, however, by the time the new channel was constructed, and because the new channel made the old one obsolete for navigation purposes, using the name "Cow Channel" for the new waterway was not expected to cause any confusion.

47. Ng, Christopher, and Martha Purdy; Loggerhead Turtle Monitoring Project; Hammocks Beach State Park; unpublished project report, August 25, 1979, p. 2.

48. National Marine Fisheries Service; informational brochure, undated.

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