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The North Carolina Booklet.

GREAT EVENTS IN ..... NORTH CAROLINA HISTORY.

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The County of Clarendon.

Or. Old Charleston on the Cape Fear

—BY—

JAMES S. BARRETT.
BASSETT

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'Carolina! Carolina! Heaven's blessings attend her!
While we live we will cherish, protect and defend her.'

THE COUNTY OF CLARENDON.

BY JOHN SPENCER BASSETT, PH. D.

It is to the island of Barbados that we must look for the beginning of Clarendon county on the Cape Fear. To this island came during the parliamentary war in England a number of loyalists who would not submit themselves to Cromwell. They found the place a welcome but a restricted home far south of the Tropic of Cancer. Sugar grew profitably and wealth began to accumulate. But one thing disturbed the thoughts of the settlers. They realized that they were on a small island, where no influential community could be planted, and where their children would find themselves isolated among the people of the earth or forced to seek homes elsewhere. It seemed good to some of them to move at once to a larger and more promising field. Added to this was a political reason for their dissatisfaction in the island. It had long ago been granted to Lord Carlisle who failed to improve it. When the loyalist refugees came to it they found no one to forbid them to settle and no one to sell them land. They took possession and built their homes without land titles. Ere long the original proprietor's claim was brought up and a cloud was thus cast upon their titles. This caused them much concern and concern deepened into dismay when, after some long discussions, it was decided that the settlers should pay to the proprietor's creditors, for he was deeply in debt, four and a half per cent. of their gross yearly produce, and that after

these creditors were satisfied the inhabitants should continue to pay a like sum to the king. It was equivalent, said they in dismay, to a tax of ten per cent. on their net incomes. Their dissatisfaction was little allayed by the fact that the king after the restoration in 1661, as a token of his esteem for the islanders, made baronets of thirteen of them, among whom were John Colleton, one of the future proprietors of Carolina, and in due time, Sir John Yeamans, who took part in planting the Cape Fear colony, as we shall soon see.

In 1663 the king granted Carolina to the eight Lord Proprietors. It was natural for the Barbadians to think of this as a field for their settlement. Promptly, in less than six months after the king signed the grant, two gentlemen of Barbados, Thomas Modyford and Peter Colleton, wrote to the new proprietors in behalf of themselves and two hundred others of the same place proposing that they should make a settlement 'in that goodly land of Florida," (on the Cape Fear river.) They declared that many hundreds of experienced and respectable planters of Barbados would follow them to the proposed colony if they were properly encouraged. They asked to be allowed to name their own rulers, to make their own laws, and to have a tract of land consisting of one thousand square miles subject to fixed rents. They asserted that they were qualified for the task of settling the place "as well for their experienced planters, as for the number of their Negro and other servants fit for such labor as will be there required."

This was not the first information the proprietors had of the design of the Barbadians. Private letters had already

told them the same story, and on August 25th they sent to the island an outline of the terms on which they would grant land in Carolina. They announced that a colony might settle on the south side of Cape Fear river, near the mouth, that 20 000 acres of land must be reserved in such a colony for the proprietors, that the settlers must send them the names of thirteen men, from whom they would appoint a governor and six councillors to rule the colony for three years, that there should be an assembly chosen by the people to make laws, subject to the approval of the proprietors, that all persons should have personal and religious liberty, and that for the first five years each adventurer should have one hundred acres of land for himself, fifty acres for each man-servant and thirty acres for each woman-servant. For this land they reserved as an acknowledgement and to help pay the charges of settlement one-half penny for each acre—presumably as a quit-rent, though the proposals do not explicitly say as much. It was expected that this colony would produce wine, oil, silk, rice, currants, etc., which were not then raised elsewhere in the king's possessions. The Duke of Albemarle, who was the executive head of the eight proprietors, wrote cautiously to the governor of Barbados explaining that it would be an advantage to that island to have the proposed colony planted. It would prevent, said he, an overproduction of sugar, and that would promote the interests of Barbados, by taking off a part of the sugar planters there. He added, and it was much more to the point, that the new colony would produce corn, beef, and pork for the supply of the island.

He might also have mentioned in the same connection staves and lumber.

The proposed Barbadian colony was not the first which went to the Cape Fear. Some time before it was projected some New Englanders had discovered and entered the mouth of the river. They found out how favorable a place it was for a colony and gave report of it at home. The feature which attracted them was the large cane-brakes and open meadow. It seemed to them to offer advantages for cattle-raising.

The New Englanders secured an Indian grant for the region—and prepared to make a settlement. They brought the matter before some London business men, and a company was organized there to co-operate with them in their scheme. To these they declared that they were the first who had ever entered the mouth of the river, which they called the Charles, the first to land and set foot on its banks, and that they possessed good Indian deeds to the land, after the fashion of settlers who came into some new region. They went so far as to apply to the king for a patent, not doubting that it would be granted. But in this they were disappointed. When Carolina was granted to the proprietors, these Londoners sent to the latter a petition in behalf of the New England enterprise. The settlement had already been made, and since the patent for it could not be got from the king it was important that some kind of an arrangement should be made with the proprietors. Speaking for their associates in New England, who were the controlling part of the company, the petitioners asked that the new settlement be

given as liberal a form of government as was enjoyed by New England colonies generally; that is to say, that they might choose their own governors, make and confirm their own laws, and be exempt from any taxes but those they laid themselves. If either of these privileges was not fully granted to them then those who were concerned in the settlement, although some of them had established considerable estates there, would incontinently abandon it. The petitioners added, furthermore, that the progress of the settlement had recently met a short check from some who had gone thither and becoming dissatified had returned to New England with reports in their mouths about the difficulties of the harbor, and the sterility of the soil. They urged that the privileges requested be granted, lest the refusal of them in connection with this evil report should be the end of the colony. What answer they received we do not know. But we know from the proposals the proprietors made for settlers on August 25th, that they were not disposed to introduce New England institutions into Carolina, and we know, also, that the New England colony was withdrawn by its promoters. When they withdrew they set up a post on which they placed a bit of information very uncomplimentary to the place.

The settlement of the Cape Fear was left, therefore, to the Barbadians. They had heard of the bad report of the New Englanders, but they did not believe it, as became good Cavaliers. They had already sent William Hilton to explore the Carolina coast, and his report was good. They were about to send him on another trip for the same purpose. He was dispatched with two others in the fall of 1663

and the explorers were in the river from October 12 till December 4. They explored the main stream as much as fifty leagues and some of its branches nearly as far. They found much poor land and much that was as good as any in the world. Of the latter there was enough to accommodate thousands of Englishmen; to all of which they duly testified in a report to those who sent them out.

"We saw mulberry trees," they said, "multitudes of grape vines, and some grapes, which we eat of. We found a very large and good tract of land on the northwest side of the river, thin of timber except here and there a very great oak, and full of grass, commonly as high as a man's middle, and in many places to his shoulders, where we saw many deer and turkeys; one deer having very large horns and great body, therefore called it Stag-Park." This delightful park, they added, stretched away for several miles. They found other tracts like this. Some of the land was pine-barrens; but most of it was good for pasturage. It was the latter fact which had attracted the New Englanders who hoped to raise cattle there. They heard of the droves of cattle left there by the New England people, but they could not find them.

The report of the commissioners pleased those who employed them. Preparations for sending out a colony were begun at once. The winter was devoted to them and in the spring of 1664 the expedition set sail from Barbados. Who led it, and how many people it contained we do not know. We only know that it arrived in the Cape Fear, or the Charles, on May 24, 1664. On the south side of this river some twenty or thirty miles from the sea they

selected the site of a town which they hoped would become the metropolis of their new nation. In loyalty to the king they called it Charles Town. They did not all settle there, however, but placed themselves along the river as they found good land. At the end of three years the plantations extended up and down the river for sixty miles.

Two prominent men in the colony were Robert Sandford and John Vassall. Peter Colleton in Barbodos and his brother, Sir John, one of the proprietors were interested in it. The displayed hurry in setting out proved to be unwise.

The proprietors, it is true, had promised liberal terms, but no formal charter had been signed. To get such an instrument they authorized Henry Vassall, a cousin of John Vassall, to negotiate in London with the proprietors. He found no difficulty in his task. He prepared the draft of a charter which was submitted to his principals in Barbados. These accepted the same and authorized him to sign it in their behalf. In the meantime, the proprietors recognized the existing state of affairs and gave it a form of legality by appointing two agents of themselves in the colony. They appointed on November 14th and 20th respectively, Robert Sandford and John Vassall to be secretary and surveyor-general of the County of Clarendon. The former was authorized to issue land grants according to the terms offered by the proprietors and the latter was to survey the land actually granted. These men were in the colony and exercised their offices, as it seems, during the years 1665, 1666, and part of 1667. For actual internal government the colony probably organized themselves ac-

cording to the plan first outlined by the Lords, but on this point we have no evidence.

It was at this point that the colony's fate was determined Another group of Barbadians desired to plant in Carolina. They were led by John Yeamans, soon to be a baronet. Yeamans was a selfish man and a skilful manipulator. He organized a company to send out a colony. He expected, as no doubt the others expected, to reap great advantages from the project by getting large tracts of land in the colony and by engaging in the trade thither. He and his associates sent his son, Major William Yeamans, to England. He opened negotiations with the proprietors in the fall of 1664. He offered them more favorable terms than Vassall had agreed to accept, and the result was that their lordships closed with him. Vassall and his associates were set aside and left to accept, if they would, the terms of the grant of Yeamans.

It was on January 7, 1665, that Major Yeamans signed the "concessions" of the proprietors, as the charter was called. This instrument was a general form of government for Carolina. It provided for three counties, each of which was to be an independent government, with governor, council, and assembly.

One county was Albermarle, or the sound of the same name; another was Clarendon, to be established on the Cape Fear river, near its mouth; the other was to be in the later colony of South Carolina. The proposed settlers might go to either of these counties as they saw fit. They decided to go to Clarendon. To all who came hither the proprietors offered to give one hundred acres of land to

each adventurer, and a like amount to his wife if he had one, and fifty acres for each able-bodied man-servant. These several amounts were to be scaled down for those who arrived after the first year. Sir John Yeamans was made governor of Clarendon as well as of all the land lying south of it as far as Florida. He had the entire confidence of the proprietors and they wrote that they had just got him made a baronet. In Barbados active preparations for a settlement were going forward. A company was formed there to promote the enterprise, and each member of it was to have 500 acres of land in the colony for each 1000 pounds of Muscovado sugar he paid into the common fund. In October, 1665, this colony sailed for its destination.

The fleet which carried them to Carolina consisted of three vessels; a "fly boat" of one hundred and fifty tons, a small frigate which was his own property, and a sloop which had been purchased for the use of the colony out of the common funds of those who projected the settlement. What Sir John Yeamans, who was only a peaceable citizen, was doing with a frigate does appear. Possibly he was concerned in the West Indian trade and had a man-of-war to be safe against the pirates in that part of the world. Possibly the frigate was a privateer. In the Caribean Sea many strange things happened in the seventeenth century.

The largest ship was the "fly boat." In it were the governor of the colony and many of his associates, as well as the arms and ammunition sent by the proprietors, and many other supplies. A storm dispearsed the little fleet soon after it set sail, but in the beginning of Novem-

ber all were reunited before the mouth of the Cape Fear river. Here they anchored; but a sudden gale came upon them and blew the "fly Boat" out to sea, she narrowly escaping the dangers of Frying Pan Shoals. "But this," says Sandford in the beginning of the account of his voyage southward, "proved but a short difference in their fate, for returning with a favourable wind to a second viewe of the entrance to Charles River, but destitute of all pilates (save their owne eyes, which the flattering Gale that conducted them did alsoe delude by covering the visage of their objected dangers with a thicke vaile of smoothe waters) they stranded their vessell on the middle ground of the harbours mouth to the Westward of the Channell where the Ebbe presently left her and the wind with its owne multiplyed forces and the auxiliaryes of the tide of flood beate her to peeces." All persons on the luckless ship were saved but most of her precious freight was lost. The two other vessels got safely into the river and landed the settlers.

The necessities of the colony were now dire. Sir John immediately returned to Barbados in his frigate. To relieve the most pressing wants he sent the sloop to Virginia where she secured a load of provisions and sailed promptly for the South. But here again an unlucky fate intervened. A storm seized her, old and rotten as she was, and drove her on the beach at Cape Lookout, whence her men were glad to escape with the loss of only two lives to the settlements on the north of Albemarle Sound. The governor had proposed to send the colony a ship from Barbados under the command of Captain Edward Stanyon. The loss of the

sloop, therefore, left this vessel the only hope of the colony. She was anxiously expected. Late in the spring of 1666 she came into port with a discouraging tale. Her captain had sailed from Barbados without a full crew, and with no first mate; storms had kept him out at sea till his mind had given way under his load of anxiety; and he had jumped overboard in a frenzy of insanity. The effect of all these events on the spirits of the colony was depressing.

When Yeamans left the colony he gave the charge of it to John Vassall, who was probably lieutenant-governor. Robert Sandford, who was in the place, was ordered to take the sloop or Captain Stanyon's ship, whichever should first arrive in the river, and go on an exploring journey along the Carolina coast to the southward. The design was to find a place for another settlement which it was expected to make in this region. Sandford took Stanyon's ship as soon as he could get it and was off on June 14, 1666. He went as far as Port Royal and on July 12 returned to Clarendon with the most favorable report of the country he had seen.

The first Barbadian settlers and the second colony lived together peacefully. In 1666 they numbered eight hundred persons. They all settled around Charles Town, and began to clear fields for themselves. They were already experienced in new world settlements and they probably had brought slaves with them.

They found the climate congenial and healthy. Houses were built, cattle were imported, fields of corn and peas were planted; and it seemed that the dangers of a "starving time," which so many new colonies experienced, would be

avoided. And, speaking literally, such a time was avoided. There was no period, as appears from the scant record which has come down to us, when food failed. The bounty of nature was too great for that.

Nevertheless there was dissatisfaction in the colony. It grew out of the relations between the settlers and the proprietors. Besides the two groups of people who had come from Barbados there were present a number of colonists from New England. These were not of the first New England movement; for when Hilton visited the river in 1663 the place was abandoned and a warning against the place had been left where all new comers might read it. But in the same year, and at the same time, that the proprietors responded to the first overtures from the Barbadians they sent their terms to New England also. It is probable that these terms caused a number of people to go from New England to Clarendon. They seemed to have arrived about the time Vassall's colony reached there. They were, however, not satisfied with conditions in Clarendon. They complained that they were not given as much political liberty as they desired, and they desired as much as was held by the people of Massachusetts. They sent doleful reports of their condition back to Boston, and in 1667, the year in which the settlement was abandoned, a general contribution was by order of the court laid on the Massachusetts colony for their relief. It was out of these discordant purposes and hopes that the enterprise was destined to reap its ruin.

The discontent was not long in coming to a formal protest. The colony of Yeamans arrived with the formal Concessions of January 7, 1665, early in November of the same

year. By this instrument they were instructed to elect an assembly of twelve delegates chosen by the people. Such an assembly was ere long in session. It proceeded straight to the task of framing a remonstrance to the proprietors, the subject of it being land tenures. Since seeing the charter and the concessions of the proprietors, said they, there were three things for which they asked redress;—"1. The halfe penny per acre for all lande, 2. The undecimall way of division of there lande, 3. The Injunction on penaltye of forfiture of keeping one man on every hundred acres." They explained these points more fully as follows:

1. The demand of half a penny quit-rent for all land was a burden because in every track there was much more pine swamp and marsh land than high land, or "oake land," as they described it. Now the former was wholly unprofitable to the owner and on it he should not be required to pay quit-rents. They were willing, however, to pay a higher rent for the oak land, as much as one penny an acre, if they might be allowed to pay quit-rent for the oak land only.

2. As to the undecimal division of the land, it is necessary to explain that in the concessions the proprietors had provided that all the land should be divided into small districts, one eleventh of each of which should be reserved for their own use. In the same spirit they ordered that the settlement should be on only one side of the river. By these two provisions the proprietors were reserving to themselves tracts of land which at some day might be very valuable. This reservation, declared the assembly, would work a great hardship on the people, since most of them had arrived in

Clarendon before the concessions were framed, and had taken up land on which they had made improvements. All this land by the new arrangement was to be divided over again. Many men would, therefore, lose their improvements. Besides, the good land was found so rarely in the large stretches of poor land that the division which was proposed to be made would bring it about that some persons should have very poor land. They added that under the existing system the eight hundred inhabitants were, through their desire to get good land, dispersed over a distance of sixty miles.

3. To the requirement of keeping one man on each hundred acres they replied that under the proposed arrangement many of the divisions of one hundred acres would not support a man.

In this petition not only the delegates joined but the lieutenant-governor and the council also. Furthermore, they were able to state that the matter had been brought before the governor before his return to Barbados and that he had at first approved it; but that when it was written out and presented to him for his signature he had refused on the ground that he did not know the soil of the country well enough to give such a positive account of its worth. After he left the colony it does not appear that he gave himself much concern about it. The lieutenant-governor was John Vassall, as appears from the responsibility he assumed in connection with the removal of the colony.

In truth, the position of the settlers was unfortunate. Most of them were of the original Vassall party. They had, as they said in their petition, come to Clarendon, when, all

the fame of this province was left in that black cloud of Reproaches which a party of new england Adventurers had wraped the whole country in, and noe mans eare or mouth or hand was open to heare or speake or act in her defense. We then for no other incitemt but the glory of that venture which is made for Publick advantage, did by a vollentary and full contrybution dispell those mists of scandall and revive a lustre bright enough to direct and provoke to a seizure by meanes of which expence your Lordshipps have the possession of a parte which may be improved to aseminary for the whole provence if the discoridgement from without the place prove not more fatall than those within it."

They had not only planted this colony but they had paid the expenses of the exploration of the whole Carolina coast to the south of them, which was a most important fact in the settlement of the province. For this expense they had been promised by one whom they regarded as the authorized agent of the proprietors in Barbados five hundred acres of land for each thousand pounds of sugar given to the common undertaking. But the new division of land ignored this promise. They could not but take it to heart, as one may see in their petition, that after all they had done another party of adventurers had "intercepted that treaty which we had commenced with your Lordships."

Those who projected Yeamans's colony had not at first designed to settle in Clarendon, but at Port Royal, to which place Yeamans's second colony was sent out in 1669. It was for a long time a favorite idea of the proprietors to have a colony there on account of the good harbor as well as of

the advantage of having so far southward an outpost against the Spaniards. Diverting the colony of 1665 to Clarendon weakened the enthusiasm of the projectors. Some calamity, the nature of which it is not easy to understand, befel Yeamans at this time, and that discouraged them from giving further assistance. This, in turn, discouraged that party who had joined in the enterprise of Vassall. Unless the proprietors, said the petition which has been mentioned, should interfere and grant the colony the favorable terms which they had one time come so near granting, inevitable ruin awaited it. There is no evidence that the proprietors were moved to any action by this paper.

In the meantime the Clarendon settlement moved on to its fate. All its supplies from abroad were cut off. Even the proprietors lost sight of the settlement. John Vassall, the head of it, declared on October 6, 1667, that he had received no communication from the proprietors since he got his commission as surveyor-general, which was issued three years earlier. The greatest need was clothing. Of corn they had enough on hand to last them two years. But they depended on the outside world for clothes. The company which sent them out thought that they forsaw certain failure and they were not willing to spend more money on the enterprise. They would not even furnish ships to carry the people back to Barbados.

In these circumstances Vassall had much trouble in maintaining his authority. Those who had risked most in the project were loth to leave it. They kept hoping for relief. The Indians cut off their cattle, but they did not dare attack the colonists. If only two hundred pounds worth of

clothing were sent them they might make out for another year. It was expected that Henry Vassall might come with succor; but this hope proved vain. Those who had least property at stake were the first to conclude that the place ought to be abandoned. They were, said John Vassall, "dayly redy to mutany against mee for keeping them there soe long." Finally they formed a project of going northward to Virginia by land. Whereupon Vassall yielded to them. He seized the first ship which came into the river and sent for other shipping in which all sailed away together in August or September, 1667. Vassall left with great reluctance. If only twenty men would stay with him, he said to the others, he would remain till he heard from the proprietors; but not six would join him. Some of the people, presumably the New England element, went to Boston. The others went to Virginia, and some of these seem to have settled finally in Albemarle County, North Carolina.

The failure of the Clarendon settlement was the first result of the insufficient rule of the proprietors. It was due primarily to the conflicting terms granted to the first and second bands of Barbadian settlers. The location itself was an important one. It had the first good harbor south of Virginia. It was on one of the longest navigable rivers in Carolina. Although there was much poor land, there was still enough good land to support the colony amply. There is nothing to indicate that the place was unhealthy. Even after the settlers gave up the colony nothing was said by them, so far as we know, against the healthfulness of the location. The only charges ever made depend on the gen-

eral charge of the unwise and unexpected reversal of the terms of taking up land, and for this reversal the proprietors were responsible.

Had the settlement prospered it would have made a vast difference in our history. The lines of settlement would have gone out from the Cape Fear instead of from the Albemarle sound. On account of the good harbor we should have been brought from an early period in our history directly into touch with Europe, instead of indirectly through other colonies. We should have had the center of colonial life so far away from Virginia that we should not have been, as we so frequently were, merely a weak reflection of Virginia ideas, Virginia business life, and Virginia politics. In fact, had the Clarendon settlement become permanent, it is hardly likely that Cape Romaine would have been the dividing point between the two great divisions of Carolina. It would have been more logical to have made Clarendon the center of a powerful colony—the southern boundary of which would properly have been the Ashley and Cooper rivers. If Clarendon had survived, Charleston probably would not have been settled in 1670, or have become so powerful after it was settled; and the center of the Southern colony might have been at Port Royal or on the Savannah.

Battles of Revolution Fought in North Carolina.

Moores Creek Bridge,	Feb'y 27th, 1776
Ramsour's Mill,	June 20th, 1780
Pacolet River,	July 14th, 1780
Earles Ford,	July 18th, 1780
Cane Creek,	Sept. 12th, 1780
Wahab's Plantation or, Wax haws	Sept. 21st, 1780
Charlotte	Sept. 26th, 1780
Wilmington,	Feb'y 1st, 1781
Cowans Ford,	Feb'y 1st, 1781
Torrence Tavern,	Feb'y 1st, 1781
Shallow Ford	Feb'y 6th, 1781
Bruce's Cross Roads,	Feb'y 12th, 1781
Haw River,	Feb'y 25th, 1781
Clapp's Mill	March 2nd, 1781
Whitsell's Mill,	March 6th, 1781
Guilford Court House,	March 15th, 1781
Hillsboro,	April 25th. 1781
Hillsboro,	Sept. 13th, 1781
Sudleys Mill, (Cane Creek.)	Sept. 13th, 1781