

The Tuscarora Indian War

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Indians Massacre Neuse and Trent River Settlers

By Bonnie Edwards

No one knows how seven-year old George Conis (also spelled Cunys, in some accounts and Koonce today) and a few other children including George Kneegay (Kornegay) survived the Indian massacre of September 22, 1711.

Jan Barwick, a former Kinston city council member and a descendant of Conis, says that although the records are incomplete and sketchy, historians have managed to gather enough information to piece together a general idea of what occurred and why it happened. In what appeared to be a coordinated attack, the Indians struck without warning all the small settlements nested along the Neuse and Trent Rivers and their tributaries.

The Tuscaroras began their march to all points on September 21, sending scouts in among the whites to reconnoiter.

As the sky grew dark, larger numbers appeared at the white settlements, asking for food as they had often done since the whites had run off most of the game which had once been plentiful. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary to the settlers.

"At dawn on the 22nd the war whoop was heard throughout the colony," according to historian Walter Clark in his account entitled Indian Massacre And Tuscarora War 1711-'13. "The domesticated Indians in the homes of the whites answered the signal of those lurking in the woods, and the massacre began."

"No age or sex was spared. The slaughter was indiscriminate and the wonder is any escaped. The torch was applied and those who had hidden themselves were forced out and killed.... The savages infuriated by the liquor they found commenced a systematic man hunt, and for three days the carnival of blood continued."

Each small band of Indians, after killing all the whites they could find in one small settlement, would proceed down the river to the next. By dark, they had reached New Berne, where one third of the population was wiped out.

Stanley A. South in "Indians In North Carolina" described the attack as "swift and vicious." He found an account in the Colonial Records of North Carolina, that said the survivors were so terrorized they fled their settlements without burying their dead, leaving the bodies of their loved ones "a prey to wolves and vultures."

In the attack on Bath County (eastern North Carolina), historians reported 130-140 settlers killed in a matter of hours.

The Indians had about 250 fighting men between the Neuse and Pamlico Rivers in the villages contiguous to the white settlements marked for destruction. Altogether, the striking force in the region that is now the central part of eastern North Carolina numbered about 800 by one account and 1,200 by another. The whites in the province had about 1,000 men able to bear arms.

Not all the area Tuscaroras attacked the settlers, according to East Carolina University Archaeologist Dr. John E. Byrd, who is currently excavating Neotheroka fort, a site in Greene County where the two-year war ended.

From evidence unearthed at several archaeological digs at eastern North Carolina Indian settlements and analysis of historical records, Dr. Byrd has discovered that the majority of the area Tuscarora did not take part in the massacre, and many Indian communities actually opposed it. The leader of the massacre was a Tuscarora Indian who had assumed the name "John Hancock."

Dr. Byrd explained that it was not unusual for the Indians to use assumed names of colonists when dealing with the settlers, because the settlers had difficulty pronouncing and spelling their Indian names.

The Indian John Hancock was a major chief at a village called Catechna near present day Grifton who had enlisted help from Neusiok and Olgonquin speaking Indians. Neither of these two groups was Tuscarora.

Dr. Byrd said traditional North Carolina-history has given the Tuscarora a "bad wrap," depicting them as blood thirsty murderers. "It's important that people understand the abuses endured by the Indians for a decade and the events that led up to the massacre," he said. "Had the tables been turned, had the Indians been kidnapping colonial women and children, the colonists would have resorted to violence very quickly."

Barwick said no one knows how George Conis survived the massacre. The Indians were killing everyone in sight, including all the women and children.

Were some spared against tribal council orders? Did the women, realizing that no one was being spared, manage to hide some of them? Did some make a run for it with babies in their arms, and being hit by arrows, fall across the bodies of their infants as they died, covering the babies from the sight of approaching braves? All anyone knows is that the surviving children grew up, married and had many children of their own who became ancestors of prominent families in the area. George's father, 36-year old John Conis, died fighting the Indians at Core Creek the following day.

George was the only one in his family to survive. Besides his father, he lost his mother Alicia, his 15-year old brother and his one-year old sister.

Rescue teams from New Berne were sent to comb the region for survivors. One of the teams reached George Conis and his friends. The men took the orphans to New Berne where families took them to raise until their 18th birthday. All were taught to read and write and trained in the foster family's trade.

George Conis and George Kneegee were placed under guardianship of Captain Jacob Miller who served as one of the earliest magistrates and presiding justices of the Craven County Court. The orphans grew up on Captain Miller's plantation at Green Spring on the south side of the Neuse. The plantation was frequently used as a meeting place of court sessions.

When George came of age, he married a member of the Miller household and settled on a plantation on the east side of great Chinquapin Creek on the north side of the Trent River in what is now Jones county. There he lived until his death on January 28, 1778 at the age of 73.

By the time Jones County was formed in 1779, his seven sons had settled on plantations along Great Chinquapin Creek and had acquired land extending northward to Beaver Creek and its tributaries westward to Joshua's Creek near the Dobbs (later Lenoir) County line and southward to Little, Chinquapin Creek and Tuckahoe Creek.

Among the descendants of the children who survived the massacre were Mrs. Caswell, John Heritage, Mrs. Jesse Cobb, William Martin Heritage, The Franks, The Islers, the Loftins, the Koonces and many more.

Some of the Indians who attacked the white settlements lived nearby and knew the people well - even liked some of them. During the two-year war that ensued, the settlers gained many allies among the Indians. They had considered themselves on good terms with their Indian neighbors. After all, it was the Indians they could thank for their survival after arriving in the New World.

Each family of settlers had been sent to the colonies with a promise of 250 acres and all the supplies they would need to live on the frontier. Their journey across the ocean had taken longer than expected, and half of them had already lost their lives on the journey.

Six hundred had sailed from England. Three hundred arrived in the New World only to be set upon by French privateers who ravaged their ship and took a lot of what they had left in the world. Next they came into what is now eastern North Carolina to find that the land they had been promised was not theirs (the property had been mortgaged). Neither were there any supplies waiting for them. Often, they had to sell what little clothing they had left in order to buy food.

It was the nearby Indians who befriended them and taught them how to raise crops indigenous to the area. That is why, a year later on the morning before the New Moon in September, they never suspected that a massacre was imminent. They not only believed the Indians to be harmless, but many of the settlers considered them friends.

But the tribal councils across the region had spoken. The land had to be cleansed of the interlopers. All small settlements - with no exceptions - were to be hit on the same day, and no one was to be spared.

"The secret was kept profound as the grave," wrote Walter Clark, "and the whites suspecting nothing, slept in fatal security."

Barwick said the settlement of "Palatines" had already been routed from Europe after being burned out of their homes in the Heidelberg vicinity of Palatinate on the Rhine River in Germany. The Palatines and Swiss were early settlers of the large area called "Bath" which included what would later become Kingston and Lenoir County.

The 300 Palatines who arrived in the New World in 1710 were followed soon afterwards by Baron Christopher DeGraffenreid and about 1,500 Swiss settlers who started New Berne.

"The Palatines were cultured, deeply religious people - the best Europe had to offer," said Barwick. "To me what is interesting is they (her ancestors) were willing to follow their religious convictions. To know that means a lot to me."

No one knows why the Indians attacked so unexpectedly and so fiercely. Walter Clark speculated that two of the more feasible reasons for the "bloody and remarkable outbreak of 1711 were (1)

"the steady encroachment upon hunting and fishing grounds that threatened their livelihood and forced them to move farther and farther from the burying grounds of their ancestors, and (2) they saw the whites engage in conflicts between themselves. This made the settlers appear divided and weakened. It encouraged the Indians to seize opportunity to remove the intruders."

Clark wrote that, shortly before the time appointed for the massacre, Indians at a village on the Neuse called Catechna captured John Lawson, who surveyed the land for the company that provided land for the Palatines, and his employer Baron Christopher De Graffenreid. Lawson and De Graffenreid had stopped over for the night on the riverbank when the Indians seized them and marched them to Catechna.

Dr. Byrd said Lawson was charged with a crime and tried at Catechna. The group was detained as trespassers and seen as part of the problems which led to the massacre. Clark believed the other settlers could have been "tipped off " had the two explorers and a Negro servant escaped from the Indians who captured them on September 10, 1711.

The next day, they were tried by the council and interrogated as to their true purposes for being there. Lawson and the Negro were executed. DeGraffenreid was sent back to New Berne with a warning for the settlers to stop the encroachment, adopt fair trade practices and end the slave raids on villages.

The settlers had no warning of the attack. De Graffenreid returned to New Berne too late. Thomas Pollock, president of the colony council and later acting governor, declared that the attack was "without any cause that we know of."

But as published in "The History of a Southern State NORTH CAROLINA", Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome of the University of North Carolina found in their research that the history of Indian-white relations during the decade following 1701 did not warrant such "optimism."

Although some of the settlers had found the Indians to be "clever and sociable," they quoted Lawson as noting: "They are really better to us than we have been to them."

Later, Lawson observed: "The Indians are very revengeful, and never forget an injury done till they have received satisfaction."

It has been acknowledged for centuries that the Indians resented encroachments on their hunting grounds and "very wisely" believed the whites would end up taking possession of all their lands.

"When the settlers purchased lands, in many cases, they failed to pay what the natives asked, as is revealed in various court records of the time," Lefler and Newsome wrote. "In 1701, the Indians along the Pamlico complained to Lawson that the English 'were very wicked people and that they threatened the Indians for hunting near their plantations'."

One of the greatest grievances, however, was the white practice of kidnapping Indians, particularly women and children. The practice was carried on so extensively that, according to Lefler and Newsome, the Pennsylvania legislature in 1705 passed a law against 'the further importation of Indian slaves from Carolina'."

De Graffenreid, however, considered the main cause of the war to be the unfair treatment and trickery against the Indians by white traders. Lefler and Newsome quoted him as saying the whites "cheated these Indians in trading, and would not allow them to hunt

near their plantations, and under that pretense took away from them their game, arms and ammunition," and that "these poor Indians, insulted in many ways by a few rough Carolinians more barbarous and unkind than the savages themselves, could not stand such treatment much longer, and began to think of their safety and of revenge."

And thanks to the white traders, the Indians were reportedly better armed on September 22, 1711 than the white settlers along the Neuse and Pamlico.

The killing, scalping and burning ensued. "One hundred and thirty people massacred at the head of the Nuse [sic], and on the south side of Pamlico [sic] rivers, in the space of two hours; butchered after the most barbarous manner that can be expressed... their houses plundered of considerable "riches (being generally traders), then burned, and their growing crops destroyed," Lefler and Newsome quoted Christopher Gate in his letter to the governor of South Carolina.

Most of the colony lay in ruins, with food and ammunition scarce. Trade had come to a screeching halt.

After gathering the surviving settlers into fortified homes, the militia appealed for help from the north and south. Virginia was slow in sending men, but a force of 600 militia and 360 friendly Indians (mostly Yemasses) under Col. John Barnwell came from South Carolina to gather survivors into temporary forts on the Chowan, Neuse and Pamlico. Since almost all crops and provisions had been destroyed, food was brought in from north of the Albemarle.

Once they reached Contentnea country, Barnwell's force advanced first to Torhunta near what is now the Wayne County line. In the surprise attack, they found the village armed only with women, children and the elderly. Most of the men were gone, whether on a hunting trip no one knows.

Neoheroka between today's Wayne County line and Snow Hill was next. No fort was found at that time. Bamwell's force looted the community and kept on going.

Innennits, a village near present day Snow Hill, was next. Barnwell's militia and their Indian allies sacked the village, which had been abandoned. They found a fort there and burned it.

When they reached the next abandoned village, Caunookehoe near present day Maury, Bamwell's men looted the houses and spent the night.

On March 5, they also found the Catechna village (near Grifton) abandoned. Two days later, Barnwell signed a treaty at the Catechna fort.

"You couldn't sneak up on these people," Dr. Byrd said. "If a big army was advancing on them, they just grabbed up what they could and went and hid."

On March 8, Barnwell left for New Berne, where he stayed until March 29. He then took his force back upstream and established Fort Barnwell on the Neuse between Kinston and New Berne.

On April 7, Barnwell marched back to the Catechna Fort, attacked it and destroyed it.

Dr. Bryd said there has been great controversy about the circumstances surrounding the second attack. But from analysis of historical records and the dig sites at the various Indian villages in Contentnea country, he said it appears Barnwell signed the treaty

without authorization on March 7, 1712 and then broke it by attacking again.

"There's a lot of intrigue regarding Barnwell," said Dr. Byrd. "North Carolinians hated him and accused him of all kinds of impropriety. No records are specific. There were a lot of factions in North Carolina at the time. Barnwell had aligned himself with one that opposed North Carolina Governor Edward Hyde's President of Council Col. Thomas Pollock.

He left North Carolina in just as bad a state as he found it in. The Tuscarora resumed the war path and went back out on raids against the settlers. His big blunder was making a sham peace and then breaking it, which infuriated the enemy. Barnwell might as well have never come. In colonial literature, one complaint about Barnwell was that he deceived the Indians by arranging a meeting after a peace treaty had been signed. When the Indians showed up for the meeting, they were attacked and many were taken to the South Carolina slave traders - the last thing Barnwell did before he left the state.

Dr. Byrd said a Tuscarora writer in the 1800s, Elias Johnson, confirmed the colonial accounts of Barnwell's treachery. In the Tuscarora account, Barnwell is not named, but Johnson does describe the situation. There was a treaty. Indians were told, as outlined in the treaty, to meet the colonials at a certain place at a certain time to receive "gifts." When they showed up, they were unarmed and were massacred.

As more forts were being built, rumors spread throughout the region that the Five Iroquois Nations of New York were on their way down to "join their Tuscarora brethren for the destruction of the province."

Around the same time, the colony experienced an outbreak of yellow fever. Governor Hyde died, and his President of Council, Col. Thomas Pollock, became governor.

By September of 1712, the available force of armed men was only 140. Col. Pollock, the colony's new Commander-in-Chief, sent Indian messengers to negotiate with the Five Nations, which agreed not to come to the Carolinas.

On November 25, 1712, Pollock met with Chief Tom Blunt, who had refused to attack in the initial massacre. Blunt, who had a following on the Roanoke and Tar Rivers, and five of the Contentnea country chiefs representing Toisnot, Torhunta, Kenta, Neoheroka, Innermits and Caunookehoe signed a treaty of neutrality and agreed to capture and bring in King Hancock, the most hostile of the chiefs - which he did later.

These chiefs agreed to not only remain detached from the Confederacy, but agreed to make war on the Catechnas and Neusioks and their allies from Core Sound, Bear river, Pamlico and Matchapungo. Blunt and the Contentnea chiefs agreed in the treaty to slay all above 14 years of age, and further, to return all property stolen from the English, and to relinquish all claims to lands south of Neuse River or below Catechna and Bear Creek on the north side of the Pamlico River. They agreed to turn over all captives taken during the war.

By this time, however, Pollock had already requested more aid from South Carolina. (He had asked that the force be led by anyone other than Barnwell.)

South Carolina did send another force. On their way up to the communities that had just signed the treaty were 1000 Indians (including Yamassee and Cherokee) and 50 white men under command of Colonel James Moore. (Another account shows Moore's force consisting of 850 friendly Indians and 35 white soldiers.) The Commander-in-Chief of the North Carolina colony had been so thorough in his preparation for war, he had even acquired the aid of the Quakers, who had consistently refused to fight but agreed to send provisions for the approaching forces from South Carolina. Moore's force had not been promised payment by the poor colony of North Carolina. They were promised an opportunity to take plunder and capture slaves - which they did.

Moore's force attacked the Contentnea villages as he moved north, unwittingly breaking the treaty.

Dr. Byrd said the sequence of events in the war from the massacre to Neoheroke has never been fully described or properly detailed by historians due to a lack of information.

"The peace treaty signed in November of 1712 between the Tuscarora and the North Carolina colony has been traditionally ignored as insignificant by the historians because they felt that the Tuscaroras ignored it," said Dr. Byrd. "Therefore, it was null and void. But it's closer to the truth that it was actually the colonists that defaulted on the treaty.

"It was really one of those accidents of history," Dr. Byrd continued. "All the Tuscarora communities except Catechna (and including the Neoheroke community) came to sign the treaty. They were to return all the White captives taken during the war up until that time. Delivery was to be made in January of 1713.

"They went home in November not knowing that Moore's force was on its way. Moore had no way of knowing about the treaty and came into Tuscarora country the following month and attacked the Tuscarora along Contentnea Creek."

In need of provisions, Moore's force reached the seat of North Carolina government in Albemarle and settled in for what would become a harsh winter. The treaty had "rained on their parade." The force of 1,000 men soon ate the poor county out of house and home. Moore's Indians started killing people's cattle and taking their crops. Those who came to help ended up worse than the Tuscarora. This placed Pollock in a dilemma," said Dr. Byrd. "He could not feed the South Carolina force and needed to get rid of them."

"The Tuscarora were supposed to return captives, but had been attacked shortly after the treaty was signed. They had ceased all attacks and were gathering up captives to take to Albemarle when Moore advances on them. It's not surprising that they didn't put a lot of confidence in the treaty any more."

To get rid of the 1,000 hungry men, Pollock's solution was to use the Tuscarora failure to return captives in January as an excuse to send Moore's force south again to attack them.

It was not until the next spring that the force advanced. In March of 1713, they did not find anyone at Catechna, did find an Indian Fort on Contentnea Creek called Neoheroke that had been built near where Snow Hill now stands. This was one of the communities that had signed the treaty.

By this time, Hancock had been executed. Dr. Byrd said it is still unknown whether any of Hancock's Catechnas had gone to the

Neoheroka fort. Some think they may have already headed north toward New York.

Walter Clark wrote: "A large number of Indians were slain and 800 were taken. Moore lost 58 men, of whom only 24 were whites. The Indian allies, as in the previous expedition under Barnwell, having secured all the prisoners they could for slaves, left for home...

"The defeated Indians had another fort, Cahunke, about 40 miles southwest, to which those who escaped fled, but taught by the loss of two forts, they did not trust their palisades again and abandoned this fort before Col. Moore reached it. The greater part under Hancock (Hancock is dead, remember?) crossed the Roanoke higher up and joined their kindred in New York whose designation was henceforward the Six Nations....."

Dr. Byrd said the Tuscarora under, Chief Blunt, who had been neutral during the war, maintained a good relationship with the colonials and obtained a reservation in Bertie County in the 1720s.

Walter Clark observed that the victory at (Neoheroka) came just in time, as it was afterwards learned that the Five Nations were on the point of coming to the aid of the Tuscaroras in this province. Clark wrote: "Had the Five Nations joined their Tuscarora brethren, as was twice imminent, the total destruction of the colony was within the bounds of probability. From this we were saved first by the efforts of Gov. Pollock and later by the victory at Nahucke (Neoheroka)."

Had the Tuscarora been united as a single military force, Dr. Byrd said they could not have been defeated by any of the colonial forces. But they were a tribal society, which he said typically does not normally have a professional military organization. Also, Dr. Byrd said they did not have the type of government framework that would facilitate such large scale cooperative efforts.

"The North Carolina colony was politically divided and as a consequence was completely ineffective from a military standpoint,"

Dr. Byrd added. "They were unable to mount any kind of effective defense against the Indians. If South Carolina had not stepped in, the Tuscarora would have pushed the colonists right into the ocean."

Lefler and Newsome spelled the fort's name Nohoroco and reported Pollock and Moore's losses at 57 killed and 82 wounded. "Enemies Destroyed is as follows: Prisoners 392, Scolps (sic) 192... Least 200 Killed & Burnt in ye fort - & 166 Kill'd & taken out of ye fort" reported Pollock.

According to the UNC historians, Govenor Spotswood claimed : North Carolina has destroyed a number of captives with 'exquisite tortures', and that an undetermined number of prisoners were sold as slaves for 10 English pounds each." (Another account numbers Indian casualties at Neoheroka as 950 "taken," which included about half killed and the other half taken as slaves. Moore's losses were numbered at 57 killed and 82 wounded.)

According to a release from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, all but a handful of Tuscarora fled to New York. The few hostile Indians left hid in the Alligator Swamp and carried on sporadic raids for two more years. On February 11, 1715, the Tuscarora signed a treaty which formally ended the wars. This account names the Indian fort "Nooherooka."

In Lawson's early accounts of his contact with the Indians, their disposition and temperment were described is subject to both extremes of sincere friendship and deadly hatred. The words "to be like an Indian" meant to never forget a kindness or forgive an injury.

When the settlers first arrived, the Indians acted as traders between the colonists and Siouan tribes inland. To the Siouan towns they took wooden bowls and other objects they made to trade for furs. The furs would then be traded to the settlers for guns, beads, pipes, axes and rum.

In 1701, Lawson wrote that the Tuscaroras had 15 towns and about 1200 fighting men. He estimated the total population at 5,000. Clothing consisted entirely of skins of wild animals, usually deer. Agricultural implements were wooden sticks. Women gardened, cooked, made mats and baskets and cared for the children. Lawson described the North Carolina Indians as "well shaped, being clean limbed, free from deformity and inclined to be tall. They always carried themselves very straight unless bent by age." He never saw a humpbacked Indian or a dwarf, and cripples were very rare.

The men plucked hair from their faces, Lawson said. Their eyes were very good, and blindness was practically unknown. The teeth of Indians of both sexes and all tribes were yellow from constant smoking of tobacco. He described them as strong,, robust and of great endurance.

Lawson said the white settlers were, in the main, well treated until they began to encroach upon the rights of and injure the Indians. He said he was "very kindly entertained" during his trips into the territory of the North Carolina Indians - right up until the time they killed him.

One historian noted that the surveyor Lawson and his employer DeGraffenreid had almost reached the white settlements when an arrow was shot at him by some Tuscaroras with whom settlers had had unpleasant relations.

"When an Indian or body of Indians conceived hatred towards anyone, they were not content until the person was put to death by the severest torture", wrote Stanley South. "And in attaining this vengeance, no treachery or deception was too mean or base."

Traditional historians claimed that Lawson's purpose for surveying for DeGraffenreid was to gather material for historical and descriptive sketches. His surveying work, however, roused suspicions among the Indians and his party was captured. On closer examination, historians too have become suspicious of Lawson's true motives.

Was he there to draw 'pictures of the birdies? Did he have history on his mind?

Dr. Byrd said it's doubtful that Lawson's purpose for being in Indian territory was what he claimed it to be. "Lawson worked for the Lords Proprietors," said Dr. Byrd. "His motives were probably related to land aquisition."

The mutual hospitality appears to have broken down as settlers showed more and more contempt for the Indians. Even historians have showed a little mendacity in their accounts: "The settlers naturally held the Indians in some contempt since they realized that they were superior to the red men intellectually and independent of them." wrote Stanley South, who considered them weak minded and excessively addicted to the settlers' rum. White traders eventually began selling them bad goods at prices that would have been high for goods of the best quality. Guns were sold with crooked barrels. Bad rum was sold for good mink, deer skins, etc.

South continued: "The Indians naturally respected the whites; since they were dependent on the white people for a great many valuable articles such as guns, knives, hatchets, and other such instruments. Also after once tasting the white man's 'water of life' the weak minded Indian would do almost anything for another mouthful of it. The white people thus assumed a position of superiority over the Indians without objection on their part."

By the year 1711, South wrote, the settlers had so advanced that "they were now treading upon the heels of a tribe or family of tribes as warlike, cruel, and cunning as any in the United States. Their numbers were considerable also. They could muster 1200 or 1500 fighting men. They inhabited a great section of territory bordering and north of the Neuse River. They were directly in the path of the advancing settlers and were not of a nature to be encroached upon or to surrender their lands without a struggle."

South attributed the decimation of the Indians to war, rum, disease and degeneration of the race which resulted in increase of death rate and a decrease in birth rate. "They fought frequently and with much slaughter, seldom sparing a warrior who fell into their hands," South wrote. "Furthermore, the Indians never presented a united opposition to the settlers, but fought among themselves and even aided the settlers in extinguishing other tribes.

"They were not sufficiently intelligent and broadminded to see that they must fall when fighting in this desultory and divided manner against the settlers, united and persistent. Occasionally some Indian prophet had a vision of uniting all the tribes for driving the whites from America, but never could the Indians of one province even be got to fight together in a systematic manner.... Such was the way the Indians conquered themselves."

The outbreak of disease, especially smallpox, virtually decimated many tribes. "The Indians lived an unsystematic, intemperate and unsanitary sort of life," South wrote. "They took little care of themselves, keeping well by virtue of much healthful, strenuous, outdoor exercise. They had some valuable knowledge of medicinal herbs and of healing wounds; but with all this their medical ability was very crude and limited. They lived by keeping well rather than by any ability to make a sick person well again... It is said that taken with it (smallpox) they would frequently rush into a stream and drown themselves through hopeless despair."

South said rum was a very important influence in the demise of the North Carolina Tuscarora: "This evil was introduced among them by the first white people with whom they came in contact, for it was inseparable from the adventurers of those times... Once having tasted it, a craving for it which the weakwilled Indians could not withstand seized them. They called it firewater and the more it burned them the more they desired it... Great numbers debased and shortened their lives.

"Furthermore, the race degenerated in other ways from their contact with the whites," South continued. "By it the Indians became unable to pursue their former strenuous life....

"They weakened their bodies and corrupted that which they possessed of intelligence. They were unceasingly harassed by the whites and frequently forced to change their hunting grounds.

"This placed them in an unnatural position which resulted in restlessness and discontent. Their bearing with the whites was that

of an inferior race, very galling to old warriors who had been accustomed to respect no one.
"Thus the Indians degenerated in body and mind so that they did not multiply as formerly. And thus the Indian population diminished by war, disease, effect of rum, failure to reproduce themselves rapidly due to degeneration of the race, melted away on coming in contact with the white settlers.
Dr. Byrd doesn't buy all that. Stanley South and Walter Clark did not say anything about the North Carolina colonists having inferior intellect," he said. "They (the North Carolina colonials) were far less effective in a military sense than were the Tuscarora. It was all due to the political upheaval, not due to a lack of intellect.
"The most significant reason for the rapid depopulation is that most packed up moved away. We don't know where they all went. No one has been able to successfully account for what happened to the population. They weren't all dead. At least 1,000 had been taken and sold into slavery during the war. Some went to New York. Some went to the reservation in Bertie County. The numbers don't add up. It's simply not accurate to say there was a complete degeneration of the culture.

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[Return to the Tuscarora Page](#)