Mapping the Tuscarora War

by Larry E. Tise

A brief catalogue of maps collected and exhibited at Joyner Library, East Carolina University for the Neyuheruke 300 Commemoration, March-April 2013
The English Arrive on the Coast of Virginia, 1590

When Sir Walter Raleigh sent his first explorers, Amadas and Barlowe, to Roanoke Island in 1584, native Indians already had a half century of experience with European adventurers. The Spanish had come and gone already. The English knew as well that they would encounter Indians. In this earliest depiction of the arrival of Englishmen on the coast of Carolina, the English explorers have penetrated the Outer Banks and are sailing across Roanoke Sound in the direction of Roanoke Island. The English commander holds out a cross bringing Christianity and peace to Indians standing on Roanoke Island. There are villages (denoted by circular palisades) on the Island and at two places on the mainland (Dasamonquepeuc and Pasquenoke). Each village is partly surrounded by three fields of hardy maize or corn. Other Indians are busy in the waters gathering fish—the other principal source of food for coastal Indians. Two Indian lands are indicated as well: Secotan and Weapemoe. The Indians are at peace. Meanwhile, English ships are shown foundering in the treacherous shallow waters and shoals just off the Banks.
A Map of Virginia, 1590

This first published map of Virginia appeared in 1590. Based on a manuscript map drawn by artist John White who accompanied Raleigh’s explorers in 1585-86, this map is the first of many English maps which attempted to specify which lands belong to which Indians. At this stage of English-Indian contact, the map was designed to demonstrate the location of Indian villages and habitations both as an illustration of known Indian clusters and as a guide for future English ventures. While the Indian nation later identified as “Tuscarora” does not appear on this map, the Indians identified as “Mongoack” located in the upper left of this map are probably the Tuscarora as they are located approximately where Tuscarora habitations would have been both at this time and for a full millennium prior to the arrival of Europeans on the Carolina coast.
The Village of Secota, 1590

When Raleigh’s second exploration of the Carolina coast got underway in 1585, the artist John White visited and made sketches of several Indian villages. While he did not visit Tuscarora villages away from the watery coast, Tuscarora towns would not have been much different from Secota—an Algonquian settlement on the Pamlico Sound. Secota was an agricultural center without a palisaded enclosure. Corn, tobacco, sunflower, and pumpkin plants are shown as abounding in the realm of the village. Habitations are located adjacent to growing plots so that residents could work the fields and, between agricultural operations, practice worship and participate in festival meals. A quality of peacefulness, order, and happiness seems to be omnipresent in this scene. Later explorers to Tuscarora settlements, such as naturalist John Lawson, found much the same pattern of existence.
In the Comberford Map of 1657—the first map to show European settlements in the Albemarle region of what would become North Carolina—there also appears the first specific map reference to the Tuscarora Indians. Identified in two places on the map as “The Tusarrowrowes” or “The Tuskarrowrowes Indians,” they were located in the same region between the rivers “Neus” (Neuse) and the “Moratoc” (Roanoke) as those Indians identified by John White and Thomas Harriot in 1585 as the “Mongoack.” This is where the Tuscarora would continue to live and be identified on maps until they were forcibly upended during the Tuscarora War of 1711-1713.
In 1710 Baron Christoph von Graffenried led a group of 400 Swiss and German Palatines to the junction of the Trent and Neuse Rivers to establish a settlement which he identified as New Bern. Bearing papers from the Lords Proprietors of Carolina granting him and his co-investors title to the lands they would occupy, neither Graffenried nor his associates knew or understood that the site for New Bern was precisely on the site of an important Tuscarora town known as Chattoka. Despite the presence of Tuscarora and other Indian settlements in the area, Graffenried and his partner Frantz Ludwig Michel laid out the settlement plan shown on this map—to populate the two rivers with German-speaking settlers, thus displacing Tuscarora inhabitants from both their villages and from their agricultural lands, hunting grounds, and fishing waters.
As this detail of Graffenried’s map indicates, the town of New Bern was quickly laid out in a style that reflected the densely populated town of Bern, Switzerland, which similarly lies at the junction of two waterways, but which is also perched atop craggy stone cliffs. On the map, Graffenried—like the developer of a 21st century housing tract—had sketched in spots for farms or businesses. Many of them had already been assigned when this map was completed.
Tuscarora Homeland in North Carolina

Professor David Phelps of East Carolina’s Department of Anthropology spent many years investigating potential Tuscarora settlements, villages, and fortifications across the area he identified in this 1983 map as the Tuscarora homeland in North Carolina. During the 1990s, with the assistance of Dr. John Byrd and a platoon of graduate and undergraduate students, Dr. Phelps oversaw the excavation of the site of Fort Nooharooka. Through these investigations, Drs. Phelps and Byrd were able to confirm the widespread presence of the Tuscarora Nation across more than a dozen counties surrounding present-day Greenville and Pitt County. They were also able to analyze from archaeological sources the sophisticated design of Fort Nooharooka. And they were able to document the devastation of the battle that occurred on the site on 21-23 March 1713. Countless artifacts—pottery, leather, seeds, glass, beads, tools, and weapons of war—were recovered from Fort Nooharooka and other sites. These items have been stored and conserved since the completion of the site investigations in the Phelps Anthropology Laboratory at ECU.

"Tuscarora Territory," 1983, illustration drawn by Professor David Phelps, Department of Anthropology, East Carolina University.
By September 1711—as Swiss and Palatine settlers began flooding across lands the Tuscarora still considered their own—tempers began flaring among Tuscarora and Europeans alike. According to Graffenried, war erupted when his Swiss partner Frantz Ludwig Michel, in a drunken stupor, “lost his sense of duty and coming to insult these poor Indians, took the head dress from the [Tuscarora] king and threw it as far as he could.” The Tuscarora chief retreated in anger, proclaiming that “if the Christians made peace and their alliances after that fashion he did not want to have anything to do with them.”

Soon thereafter Graffenried and North Carolina’s surveyor general John Lawson—a learned but arrogant land speculator—went on an exploring expedition from New Bern through the Tuscarora settlement at Catechna (now Grifton in Pitt County). Wary Tuscarora told the two interlopers “they would not allow us to go further up through their country.” Graffenried pleaded that he wished the Indians no harm, but listened helplessly as Lawson “upbraided” their captors. While Graffenried won his release, Lawson’s outrages resulted in his execution on the spot.

Graffenried remembered the harried moment of detention and trial in both a pen and ink sketch and in a narrative of the trial scene. For Graffenried’s description see pages 32-33.
On 22 September 1711—a few short weeks after executing Surveyor General John Lawson and releasing Graffenried—Tuscarora warriors from settlements in the Neuse and Pamlico River basins raided European homes in the vicinity of New Bern. Over the next three months they killed 130 English and German landholders. European refugees huddled in the tiny hamlet of Bath, awaiting relief from any armed militia that might come to their assistance. North Carolina’s government—feeble, faction-ridden, and unwilling to allocate money to support a military force—turned instead to the neighboring colonies of Virginia and South Carolina for assistance. Virginia did not want to participate in a war against Tuscarora villages that were business clients for tidewater merchants.

South Carolina, on the other hand, was in the process of aggressively subduing Indian nations across the southeastern area of North America. South Carolina traders were eager to capture Indians who could be placed in a vibrant Caribbean slave market. Before the African slave trade provided southern plantations with captive labor, southern traders rushed Indians to Atlantic ports where they were exported to places from Boston to Jamaica. During the course of the Tuscarora War and other far-ranging military expeditions launched from South Carolina in a wide swath extending to the Mississippi River valley, as many Indians were exported in chains from the port of Charleston as were imported from Africa.

The vast and detailed Hammerton-Barnwell Map drafted in 1721 provided a dramatic visual record and chronicle of the dozens of slave hunting forays mounted from Charleston in one of the most turbulent periods of American history.
In this detail of the North Carolina portion of the elaborate Hammerton-Barnwell Map of 1721, one can follow the bloody pathway of John Barnwell and James Moore’s expeditions from South Carolina to the Tuscarora homeland in 1711, 1712 and 1713 and note the destruction of villages as they went along—(from lower left) across the Pee Dee and Cape Fear Rivers to the Nues (Neuse) where they “took” one place after another culminating in the center of these grounds where “Naherook fort taken 1713 by Col, Moore” (center of map). By subduing these nations and taking their lands over this brief period of time, a vast body of natural wealth was transferred from Indian hands to colonial land authorities and speculators.
The Nooherooka Map, 1713—"The Battle at Fort Nooherooka, 21-23 March 1713"

The Nooherooka Map is both the symbolic and real centerpiece of the Nooherooka 300 commemoration. It is an elegant representation and narrative--made from a victorious colonial point of view--of what occurred at Fort Nooherooka on 21-23 March 1713. Its maker and narrator are unknown--and its history remains obscure. Yet it is virtually unique as a battle map from this period of American history owned by the South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston. Given its importance to this story and as a treasure of American history, the map is being collaboratively examined and analyzed at East Carolina with the South Carolina Historical Society and teams of scholars and conservators. The goal of ECU scholars is to understand the map as a primary account of the battle at Fort Nooherooka, to determine--if possible--its origins, and to prepare a proper course of conservation treatment for the fragile document.
After the Trenches were carried on with good success and a Triangular Blockhous Finished att A[,] and a Battery at B so high that from them they might Fire over the Enemies Fort[,] and Mine carried under the Enemy's works to C[,] and every Person ordered [to] his Post ready for a Generall Storm:

On Fryday the 20 of March 1712/3 about tenn of the clock in the Morning, the Mine was sprung, but with very little Success the Poudar being damnified. However[], Att the Sound of the Trumpet the [Assault] was made. Cap' Stone with 12 white Men from L and Capt Moore with his Brother [illeg.] [Captain Hastings,] Cap' Harford[,] and) Capt Thurston with other white Men and Indians from under the [illeg.] creek side o o o o o. Presently made [themselves] Masters of the Enemies works from G to K with very little loss of Men, Notwithstanding the Enemy Fired very briskly through the same Loopholes that our men attacked them at[.]

Capt Maul who was ordered from the Mulberry Battery to make his Attack between D and K[,] Imagining he had some better advantage or mistaking his orders[,] marched between Bastions E and D from which Bastions the Enemy made very great Fire, And of which Company [illeg.] [twenty] Escaped being killed or wounded, being the greatest Loss sustained dureing the Attack.

Capt Canty from the Yamasee Battery being ordered to attack the same place which Capt Maul [was] ordered to. Seeing Cap' Maul was gon on the wrong side of the Bastion and that his Indians did not come up readily went to the Commander in chief who was in the Battery B ( [illeg.] with Cap' [illeg.] Cap' [illeg.] (wounded) immediately followed with the same Story and added that unless he was [relieved, they] would all perish; Coll Moore immediately ordered to make all the Fire that could [be made from] Battery B upon the two Bastions E and D and Capt Maul retreated.

At the same [time Coll.] Moore observing that the small Lodgment made on the Enemys work att G. was [not sufficient] to Shelter above three Men[,] he sent some Spades to them with which they [flanked?] to the Northeast capable to shelter a great number from the Fire of the Enemy made [from] F and then commanded the work K to be set on Fire, from thence the Commander in Chiefe went to Capt Hastings who behaved himself very bravely att G and ordered Fire to putt [illeg.] and by the next morning that [illeg.] [was carried?] with the Bastion of Blockhouse F and several houses within the Fort.

The Enemy made verry great Resistance, and chose rather to perish by Fire within the Bastion [F] than to retreat in the Caves made under Ground from whence some haveing timely made their Retreat and gott in the Caves did verry much mischeif the next day and part of the Day following being Sunday, about tenn of the Clock We were entirely Masters of itt the Last place which was held out being the wattering place I which [some] of the Enemy had Fortified more strongly after the Fort had ben sett on Fire.

IN this Action is computed by the Enemies own Account their least Loss was two hundred and seventy of their Briskest men besides others aged and young Fellows, And with what Prisoners were taken their whole Loss cannot be Less than Eight hundred.

LOSS ON OUR SIDE.
Twenty two white men killed, Twenty six white men wounded, whereof twelve killed and Eighteen wounded of Capt Maul's Company [illeg.] [Indians] killed, [Fifty eight] Wounded.
Moseley Printed Map of North Carolina, 1733--
"formerly Inhabited by the Tuskeruro Indians"

The most important map of North Carolina in the first half of the 18th century was the great Moseley Map printed in London in 1733. It was compiled and designed by Edward Moseley (1682-1749)--Surveyor General and treasurer of the North Carolina colony, a political operative, and a land speculator. Only three copies of the printed version are known to exist--including a magnificent copy owned by Joyner Library. This detail of the great map is from the carefully preserved copy at Eton College in England. This segment of the map shows the location--not of the habitations of the Tuscarora in North Carolina, but rather the major Tuscarora forts that were taken by colonial forces during the Tuscarora War twenty years previously--Torhunta Fort, Conneghata Fort, and, of course, Nooherooka Fort. Since Moseley and other North Carolina land speculators wanted to show that the Indian threat had been dealt with, the territory is described as “This part of the Country was formerly Inhabited by the Tuskeruro Indians.” The small reservation that had been created by North Carolina for the Tuscarora who remained in the colony was indicated in tiny letters--“Tuskeruro Ind”--just north of the Roanoke River in Bertie Precinct.
Moseley Manuscript Map of North Carolina, 1737--A Developer’s Realm

This manuscript version of the Moseley map dating from 1737 was recently discovered, acquired, and carefully examined by map collector Mike McNamara of Williamsburg, VA. The beautifully hand-crafted map was used as a real estate tool by North Carolina agents in London seeking to sell the bonanza of former Indian lands to would-be settlers. Whereas the printed Moseley map described the historic Tuscarora homeland as “formerly Inhabited the Tuskeruro Indians,” this version indicated that “The Tuscarora Indians now remove’d.” It also revealed for the first time Moseley’s grand scheme to put a major real estate development farther west on other former Indian lands. At the confluence of the Yadkin and Uwharrie Rivers, Moseley described his developer’s dream: “This is a Representation of an Improvement made at the conflux of two Rivers, which Demonstrates the advantages of such a Situation, both for Profit, Pleasure & Security.”
The Mitchell Map of 1755 was perhaps the most important map in American history because it was used both by diplomats in settling the boundaries of the newly created United States at the end of the American Revolution and as the base point for defining state boundaries following the great war for independence. But the map also reveals the migrations of the surviving Tuscarora Nation during the next four decades following the Tuscarora War. At the North Carolina end of the spectrum there’s but the simple notation “Tuscarora Indians now remov’d.” But in the upper reaches of the map—on lands identified as “Pensylvania”—there are several evidences of the whereabouts of the Tuscarora—just south of the Juniata River in central Pennsylvania and along several branches at the headwaters of the Susquehanna River on lands that are now in the State of New York.
Linguistically and culturally the Tuscarora are related to the Iroquois Nations who have inhabited lands in western New York for thousands of years. When the Tuscarora Nation migrated northward following the Tuscarora War, they were welcomed into the Iroquois league of nations becoming officially the sixth nation in the Iroquois Confederation. With the assistance of Iroquois nations and of the United States and New York State governments, by the early years of the nineteenth century the Tuscarora Nation carved out both a protected reservation and a new homeland. For their bravery and the support of wartime efforts both in the Revolution and the War of 1812, the Tuscarora Nation received allocations of land in western New York—fifteen miles from Niagara Falls. Granted recognition by United States government, the Tuscarora Nation has operated as a sovereign, independent nation for the past two centuries. This map made by the Holland Land Company detailing in 1800 the major tracts of land near Lakes Erie and Ontario was one of the first maps to identify clearly the emerging reservation where the Tuscarora nation resides today.