

Historic and Architectural Resources  
of  
Currituck County  
1790 - 1958

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**Introduction**

“When Nature came to design the topography of eastern North Carolina,” wrote North Carolina historian Charles Christopher Crittenden in 1936, “she almost persuaded herself to create a great maritime center.”<sup>1</sup> The interplay between water and land in Currituck is key to understanding the history and evolution of the county. Although one of the oldest in the state of North Carolina, the county has also been one of the most overlooked. Piecing together the history of the county is difficult. Many of the records pertaining to the early history of Currituck have been lost or destroyed. A courthouse fire in 1842, for example, destroyed a substantial body of records, including marriage records. As a consequence, much of the county’s past lives on as oral history; written accounts tend to be either personal reminiscences or a recounting of events that have been passed orally through the different generations of a family. The history of the county remains to be written.

**A Geographical Overview of the County**

The most northeasterly of the one hundred North Carolina counties, Currituck is a peninsula: the land is long and narrow, low and even. The county consists of a mainland portion and an offshore strand. This survey was confined to the mainland area and the islands in Currituck Sound, sometimes referred to as the Tidewater; the area of the county known as the Outer Banks was surveyed separately in 2002.

Running north and south through the county is a central elevation; from that point two creeks and roads extend to the east and west. The area is bounded by the North River to the west, Albemarle Sound to the south, and Currituck Sound to the east. Beyond the eastern shore, known as Currituck Bank, is the Atlantic Ocean. With the exception of sand dunes on the beaches, no point

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Christopher Crittenden, *The Commerce of North Carolina 1763-1789*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936, p. 8.

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in the county rises higher than 25 feet above sea level. On both shores and to the northwest, however, the county merges with the Great Dismal Swamp, a marshy area that includes some deep forest.<sup>2</sup> Currituck Sound has but a limited watershed in North Carolina. Much of its water comes from Virginia, by way of the Northwest River, the North Landing River, and the various tributaries of the Back Bay. All three of these flow into the Sound near the state line.

Groundwater is the principle source of the county's water supply. Old bedrock formations dating from the Cretaceous Age lie underneath the coastal plain. Over these old formations are deposits of sand and clay that vary in thickness from ten to forty feet. The soil content varies throughout the county, though in general the soil tends to be poorly drained and composed of loamy sand. Despite the drainage problems, the land is suited for cultivation of such crops as potatoes, corn, and soybeans. The area also contains woodlands with native trees such as loblolly pine, sweetgum, red maples, yellow poplars, willow and water oaks, black cherry, and American beeches.<sup>3</sup>

A focal point of the county history is the Currituck Sound, a protected inlet of the Atlantic Ocean. Separated from the Atlantic by the portions of the Outer Banks in Currituck County and northern Dare County, Currituck Sound spans thirty miles from north to the south and extends three to eight miles wide. To the northeast, the Sound joins Back Bay in Virginia Beach, Virginia; a fork to the northwest leads to the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal, part of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. To the south, Currituck Sound joins Albemarle Sound. The North Landing River, the Northwest River, and Back Bay feed Currituck Sound.

In its early beginnings, Currituck Sound was a saltwater body; a series of inlets connected the Sound to the ocean. Since the early settlement of the county, six inlets have opened and closed on Currituck Sound. Two of the most important for Currituck history are the Old Currituck Inlet, located on the North Carolina-Virginia border, which dates from before 1687 to ca. 1730. This

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<sup>2</sup> Bill Sharpe, "26 Counties," in *A New Geography of North Carolina*, Volume 3, Sharpe Publishing Company, Raleigh, NC, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, *Soil Survey of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Washington D.C: United States Department of Agriculture, 1982, p. 21.

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inlet was vital to early trading vessels during the colonial period. The New Currituck Inlet, which opened in 1713, was located several miles south of the Old Currituck Inlet. This waterway remained open almost one hundred years, but it too, eventually closed by natural sedimentation, in 1828. Musketo Inlet, near the town of Corolla closed between 1672 and 1682. To the south, Trinity Harbor Inlet closed too during the mid-1600s. Caffey's Inlet which opened between 1790 and 1798 near the Currituck-Dare County line was the last inlet into the Sound. An important development occurred with its closing sometime during the early nineteenth century: Currituck became landlocked and the sound's waters freshened turning from salt to brackish.<sup>4</sup>

Given the close proximity of the mainland to the Atlantic Ocean, in addition to other bodies of water, Currituck County enjoys a maritime climate. Summers are hot and humid, though the coast does receive cool sea breezes. Winter is cool with some cold periods and snowfall is rare. Rain falls throughout the year and can be fairly heavy. In recent years, though, the county has been suffering from drought. The area also has a long history of storm activity consisting of two different types: tropical storms or hurricanes and extratropical storms, more commonly known as nor'easters. Such storms were responsible for opening and closing the inlets. For example, the opening of the New Currituck Inlet led to the closing of the Old Currituck Inlet.

The principal highway, NC168, marks the firmest land in the county, and serves as the major north-south corridor from the Virginia state line to the intersection of US 158 at Barco. From this point, NC 168 joins US 158 and continues south to the Outer Banks in Dare County via the four-lane divided span Wright Memorial Bridge. US 158 is the major east-west intrastate corridor from the Outer Banks to the interior of North Carolina. NC 34 also links NC 168 at Sligo to US 158 in Camden.

The Intracoastal Waterway, a toll-free route, is 3,000 miles (4,827 km) long, partly natural, partly man-made, providing sheltered passage for commercial and leisure boats along the Atlantic coast from Boston, Massachusetts to Key West, Florida, and along the Gulf Coast from Apalachee

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<sup>4</sup> Keith N. Meverden, "Currituck Sound Regional Remote Sensing Survey, Currituck County, North Carolina," Unpublished master's thesis, East Carolina University, 2005, p. 25, Orrin H. Pilkey, *The North Carolina Shore and Its Barrier Island: Restless Ribbons of Sand*, Durham, NC.; Duke University Press, 1998, pp. 139-140.

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Bay, Florida. to Brownsville, Texas. The Albemarle portion of the waterway in Currituck is among the busiest canals along the Atlantic route.

There are no incorporated towns in Currituck County; instead there are four townships: Poplar Branch, Crawford, Fruitville, and Moyock, each with a number of small communities. Currituck County is not a large area. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the county occupies approximately 443.63 square miles; of that total area, approximately 262 square miles is land, while 264 square miles, or 50.21 percent, is water. The 2000 census also states that the county has a population of approximately 18,190 persons, with the northern end of the county the most heavily populated.

**Native American Occupation and Early Settlement**

It is believed that the first peoples arrived in North America between 28,000 and 20,000 years ago. Descended from the Asian hunters who had crossed from Siberia over the Bering Land Bridge into Alaska, these peoples began to settle in what is now North Carolina between 9,000 and 8,500 B.C. When the first permanent English settlers arrived in North Carolina during the sixteenth century, almost thirty different Indian tribes already lived in the region.

At the time of the first contact between Europeans and Indians, the Algonquian tribes occupied the tidewater areas of the Atlantic Coast, extending from Canada as far south as the Neuse River in North Carolina. In 1584, the estimated 7,000 Algonquians living in North Carolina were relative newcomers to the southeast, having come in a series of migrations. To some extent, they retained cultural elements from their Northeastern Algonquian traditions, but there was also a great deal of cultural borrowing from their southern neighbors as they adapted to geographical and

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climatic conditions to become more oriented to the water and to place greater emphasis on hunting, fishing, and gathering.<sup>5</sup>

Currituck became home to members of the Algonquian nation; among the most prominent was the Weopemeoc, which included the Yeopin and Poteskeet tribes. Archaeological remains uncovered in the area of Poplar Branch in 1972 have fleshed out the story of the county's first residents. Like the majority of other Algonquin Indians, the three groups were mainly sedentary and agricultural. Their bounty appears to have been limitless, as they grew such crops as corn, squash, beans, and tobacco. Their environment provided them with everything they needed. In the abundant woodlands they hunted various wild animals for Canoes used for fishing were of two kinds: one made of birch bark, which was very light and maneuverable, but liable to capsize; the other made from the trunk of a large tree, which was heavier but also more stable. Clothing was made chiefly of animal skins, tanned until soft and pliable, and was sometimes ornamented with paint and beads made from shells. Occasionally the Wepemeoc bedecked themselves with mantles made of feathers overlapping each other as on the back of the fowl. Their houses, known as *wetu*, were small, usually 8 to 10 feet tall and constructed of wood.

The Weopemeocs' first contact with whites came between 1584 and 1589 when Sir Walter Raleigh and a group of English colonists came to the territory north of Albemarle Island, North Carolina, an area that includes most of Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, and Perquimans counties. At the time, the tribe numbered between 700 and 800 led by their chief Okisco. Like the other Algonquin groups in the area, the Weopemeocs did not build long-term alliances with each other; what alliances existed between tribes were generally temporary and without real cohesion. By 1700, their numbers had dwindled to only 200, and by mid-century had decreased to almost nothing.

In 1660 Kiscutanewh, King of the Weopemeoc, granted a tract of land to Nathaniel Batts and in 1662, another tract to George Durant, the first deeds for land in North Carolina.

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<sup>5</sup> Herbert S. Paschal, "The Tragedy of the North Carolina Indians," in Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson, *The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretative & Documentary History*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, p. 4.

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But relations between the two groups disintegrated; by 1697 the Weopemeoc complained to the colonial government about the increasing number of white settlers coming into the territory. In 1704 the Executive Council created a reservation of 10,240 acres on the North River for the tribe; the land transfer was among the largest ever carried out during the proprietary period. The Council also promised to the tribe exclusive hunting and fishing rights. In return, the Weopemeoc were to give to the Council one-half of any gold and silver they found and pay a quitrent of one ear of corn per year. In 1723 the Indians sold 640 acres of their holdings and in 1739 sought and received permission to sell any land as they may wish.

The history of the Poteskeet tribe is even more elusive than that of the Weopemeoc. The Poteskeet hunted and fished, but their location is difficult to pinpoint. The Edward Mosely map of 1733 places two Poteskeet villages in the lower southern and western portions of the county.

The earliest record of European exploration of the region dates from 1524 with the arrival of a group of Portuguese and Florentine adventurers led by Giovanni da Verrazzano. The group landed near Cape Fear on March 21, 1524. Verrazzano's account provides the first descriptions of North Carolina; though Verrazzano's travels never led him to Currituck, his descriptions of a land filled with many trees, an abundance of wildlife, and fresh water could have easily described the area.<sup>6</sup> In 1566, a group of Spanish missionaries, hoping to establish a church in the Chesapeake Bay area, sailed into Currituck Sound, when rough weather forced their boat off course. A member of the group erected a wooden cross on shore. Despite declaring that the area held little value, the expedition leader, Domingo Fernandez, still claimed it for the King of Spain, Phillip II.<sup>7</sup>

Not to be outdone, the English began sending expeditions to the New World. Between 1584 and 1587, the English attempted to settle portions of the North Carolina coast, including the first English settlement at Roanoke Island. The Roanoke colony ultimately failed; however, the English had established a presence and would soon control the lands north of Florida, in effect pushing the

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<sup>6</sup> Meverden, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> William Stevens Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, pp. 32-33.

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Spanish out of the entire Atlantic seaboard. With the successful establishment of the Jamestown settlement in the Virginia colony, an increasing number of English settlers came to the New World. By 1650, Virginia officials were granting settlers land in the Albemarle region. It was during this period that first mention of Currituck County appears. A letter dated May 8, 1654, from Fr. Yardley to a John Farrar, identified the area as "Carotoke."<sup>8</sup>

Early Politics and Government

On March 24, 1663, Charles II of England granted to eight of his friends and councilors the province of Carolina that included all of the land between the 31<sup>st</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> degrees north latitude. Through one of the Proprietors, Sir William Berkeley, who was also governor of Virginia, grants were issued in April, 1663, for land situated in the region of Albemarle Sound. The Carolina venture almost stalled two months later when, in June 1663, the Duke of Norfolk laid claim to Carolina, based on an earlier land grant. By August 12, 1663, however, the King and council declared the duke's claim null and void because no settlement had been established.

Now free to pursue their enterprise the Proprietors next sent a letter to Governor Berkeley, asking him to appoint a governor and six councilors for the new province. According to the Proprietors, the governor would serve a term of no less than three years; his salary would be drawn from monies earned through a promised monopoly of the Indian fur trade. In addition, the Proprietors promised each settler who came to Carolina ten-acres of land. The Proprietors also became landowners stating that 20,000 acres of the new colony's land be set aside for them. They also asked to charge a quitrent of one-half penny an acre, though payments could be staggered for a period of three to five years. It was also agreed that the new provincial government recognize land titles purchased from the Indians. Berkeley had other ideas;

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<sup>8</sup> General John Elliott Wood, "Report on the Committee of Historic Sites," in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol.1, No. 2, January 2, 1957, p. 39.

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following the precedent set by Virginia, the governor signed over conveying land in the Albemarle River area based on a fifty-acre headright.<sup>9</sup>

William Drummond was named the first governor of Albemarle County in October 1664. The following year, the first constitution for the County of Albemarle was completed. The appointed governor, aided by six to twelve councilors, a secretary and a surveyor, would head the new county government. Working with the governor and his council would be a legislature of twelve representatives, chosen by freeholders. In addition, the county was to be divided into precincts headed by elected deputies.<sup>10</sup>

The new government was almost immediately faced with problems, particularly with the issue of the northern boundary between Carolina and Virginia. Initially, the boundary was set at the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel under the charter of 1663. However, by 1665, the line was moved further to the north at 36° 30', giving the colony an additional thirty miles. However, Virginia continued to claim the area, particularly when the issue of revenue from quit rents was at stake. It was decided that George Durant, a planter from Albemarle would go to Currituck to survey the boundary line. However, the issue of the northern boundary would continue to be a source of dissension between the two colonies well into the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, Albemarle County tended to its own internal boundaries, dividing the area into four precincts: Chowan, Pasquotank, Perquimans, and Currituck, making the latter one of the oldest counties in North Carolina.<sup>14</sup>

In 1677, the first known representative to the Provincial Assembly from the county was William Sears. In 1689, the county became the center of the North Carolina colony's first revolutions. Charged with bribery and the false imprisonment of his political enemies, Governor Seth Sothel was removed from office and imprisoned. Sothel was later banished from the area; the

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<sup>9</sup> "Lindley Butler, The Governorship of Albemarle County, 1663 - 1689," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 46 (1969): 282-283.

<sup>10</sup> Butler, 284.

<sup>13</sup> Butler, 284.

<sup>14</sup> Meverden, p. 2-3.

<sup>15</sup> S. Curtis Grey, "Notes," *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol.1, No.1, p.6.

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Proprietors then appointed Philip Ludwell as the new governor. When Ludwell arrived in Albemarle the following spring, however, he found that the colony was governed by a Captain John Gibbs, a relative of the Duke of Albemarle and large property owner with land in both the North Carolina and Virginia colonies. In 1682, the Proprietors of North Carolina gave Gibbs the title of *cacique*, a Spanish term for “leader” or “king.” By assuming the governor’s office, Gibbs was merely asserting what was for him a legal right to the position.

Gibbs publicly reviled Ludwell, calling him a “rascal, imposter and usurper. Let him call upon me with his sword and I will goe (sic) with him into every part of the King’s Dominions and there fight him as long as my eyelids shall wagg.”<sup>16</sup> To emphasize his position, Gibbs went to the Pasquotank Precinct where he broke up the court and took two magistrates to his home. In addition, Gibbs posted armed men at Ludwell’s home. Samuel Jarvis of Currituck advised the two men to take their complaint to the Crown. In the end, Gibbs was removed and Ludwell installed as governor, though it is believed that Gibbs oversaw at least one session of the assembly.

In addition to Sears and Jarvis, a number of other Currituck residents became active in colonial affairs. Thomas Snoden was elected Speaker of the Assembly in 1711 and also held the offices of clerk of the court and attorney general of the Province of North Carolina. William Bray was a member of the Assembly in 1711 and also served as Deputy Marshall; his duties included monitoring border activity between Virginia and North Carolina. As tensions grew over the boundary, Bray was charged with arresting any Virginian caught trespassing in Carolina.<sup>17</sup> The border was a continual source of anxiety for the proprietors, given the large number of colonists traveling back and forth, and with land claims becoming a confusing mix. In the early 1700s, explorer John Lawson began surveying a boundary between Carolina and Virginia but was unable to complete the task. The border continued to pose problems until Virginian William Byrd surveyed the line in 1728. Colonial records show that land in Currituck County was acquired in a

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<sup>16</sup> Jesse F. Pugh speech, reprinted in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol.1, No.1, p.32

<sup>17</sup> “Currituck County 1670-1970 Abstracts from Historical Notes,” in Bates, Jo Anna Heath, ed, with the Albemarle Genealogical Society, Inc. and The Currituck County Historical Society, Inc. *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, p. 108.

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variety of ways: through land grants from Virginia and North Carolina proprietors, through headrights that allowed fifty-acres per person who paid passage from England to Virginia, and through purchase from Indians. Squatters were present as well.

The First Settlers

Some of the first to settle in the area known today as Currituck came as early as 1650 from Virginia, establishing themselves on Knott's Island. Many of the earliest residents of the country settled in the "hammocks," which were hilly wooded areas that faced the Sound. By 1665, Peter Carteret and four partners had acquired a land grant in the southern part of the county in the area known today as Powells Point. They cleared between sixty and seventy acres for farming and the construction of a dwelling, quarter house, and hog house, none of which have survived.<sup>18</sup> In 1672, the town of Currituck was established. Known as the "port of Currituck," the town became a customs district for imported and exported goods. Throughout the proprietary period, Currituck was under the administrative control of the Port of Beaufort. By 1729, though, the site was recognized as the Port of Currituck. In the western part of the county, in the area known today as Shawboro, early settlers created the settlement known as Indian Town. Near the Virginia boundary, the small settlement of Moyock came into being; further south, beyond Currituck port, along what is now the Intercoastal Waterway, was the small settlement of Coinjock. The majority of landowners resided in the county instead of acting as absentee landlords. Another group of settlers arrived as a result of the burgeoning maritime trade. Many shipwrecked sailors eventually settled along the coast; in more than one case, lumber from wrecked ships provided the material with which to build a house. Those involved in shipping also made their homes along the Sound. In time, colonial customs inspectors came to live in Currituck.<sup>19</sup>

Because accurate histories of many of the county communities are lost or do not exist, early colonial maps help pinpoint the emergence of settlements throughout the county. The 1671 Ogilby

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<sup>18</sup> Pugh, p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> David Stick, *Graveyard of the Atlantic: Shipwrecks of the North Carolina Coast*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, pp. 3-4.

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Map clearly identifies Powells Point, located in the far southern end of the county. During the first two decades of the eighteenth century, a number of individuals settled in the county in areas that now bear their family name. Benjamin Tull, the descendant of French Huguenots, served as vestryman for "Carahtruck" parish. Tull's Creek, located along the eastern edge of the county, bordering Currituck Sound, was named for Tull's family. William Bell, whose family settled on Bell's Island, was a prosperous merchant who became treasurer of Currituck in 1714. Richard Church, a justice of the precinct court and a representative to the House of Commons, settled on the island that now bears his name.<sup>20</sup> In the southern region of the county, members of the Newbern family were believed to have first settled at Newbern Landing, in the area around Powells Point.

After 1712, North Carolina became the administrative district provinces of North Carolina and South Carolina. Each, however, was proving to be unprofitable for the proprietors. Less accessible and wilder in geography than neighboring Virginia, the North Carolina country grew slowly. A description of the colony seems to fit particularly the development of Currituck:

Of all the thirteen colonies, North Carolina was the least commercial, the most provincial, the farthest removed from European influences, and its wild forest life the most unrestrained. Every colony had its frontier, its borderland between civilization and savagery; but North Carolina was composed entirely of frontier. The people were impatient of legal restraints and averse to paying taxes; but their moral and religious standard was not below that of other colonies. Their freedom was the freedom of the Indian, or of the wild animal, not that of the criminal and the outlaw. Here truly was life in the primeval forest, at the core of Nature's heart. There were no cities, scarcely villages. The people were farmers or woodmen; they lived apart, scattered through the wilderness; their highways were the

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<sup>20</sup> "Currituck County 1670-1970 Abstracts from Historical Notes," p. 108.

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rivers and bays, and their homes were connected by narrow trails winding among the trees. Yet the people were happy in their freedom and contented with their lonely isolation.<sup>21</sup>

Certainly one of the first to suggest that the North Carolina colony lagged in manners and gentility was the wealthy landowner William Byrd of Virginia, who undertook a surveying expedition to settle a boundary dispute between Virginia and North Carolina in the spring and summer of 1728.<sup>22</sup> His travels took him from the border of Currituck Inlet to a point 241 miles to the west. In his *History of the Dividing Line*, Byrd writes of his first impressions of the Currituck area:

Farther Still to the Southward of us, we discovered two Smaller Islands, that go by the names of Bell's and Church's Isles [sic]. We also saw a small New England Sloop riding in the Sound, a little of the South of our Course. She had come in at the New-Inlet, as all other vessels have done since the opening of it. This Navigation is a little difficult, and fit only for Vessels that draw no more than ten feet Water.<sup>23</sup>

Despite Byrd's misgivings about North Carolinians, civilization slowly took root. Absentee landowners were rare in the county. And although land was given away by the proprietors and royal governors, private land trades in Currituck were thriving, as was the passing on of land in families through wills or deeds. In addition, during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, Currituck Precinct was losing land; in 1729, the southern portion of the area was given to the creation of Tyrrell County.

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<sup>21</sup> Henry William Elson, *History of the United States of America*, New York: MacMillan Company, 1904. p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> Byrd and other surveyors defined the line from the coast as far westward as modern Stokes County, about 240 miles. The survey of the boundary between the two colonies was completed in 1749. Still, the border was often in dispute and as late as 1887, the two states sponsored another joint boundary survey.

<sup>23</sup> William Byrd, *History of the Dividing Line*.

<sup>23</sup> William Byrd, *History of the Dividing Line*.

<sup>24</sup> In part, these activities are difficult to trace because of the lack of records, many of which were lost or burned in a fire that destroyed the county courthouse in 1803 and again in 1842.

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Transportation

The early settlers widened and improved the Indian trails into bridle trails and then dirt roads. When it became necessary to transport goods farther inland, local laws were passed directing that a road be built to the nearest landing. By this piecemeal process, the state slowly acquired a system of dirt roads. The 1733 Edward Mosely Map illustrates a "Road From Elizabeth River," which ran to the east of the Dismal Swamp and crossed Moyock Creek. The road jogged again to the east-southeast where the properties of William Tulle[sic], W. Swann and M. Dukes in the Tulls Creek area were located. The road continued west of Currituck Courthouse, marked by a small building on the map. The road then turned to the southwest and passed northwest of Indiantown to Sawyer's Ferry over the Pasquotank River. The land holdings of the Sanderson family, which were located to the south of the courthouse and the Williamson family in the area of Powells Point, are also noted on the map.

By 1760, two other roads were in existence; one branched to the southwest of Moyock Creek to the present site of South Mills in Camden County, and was believed to have crossed the swamp. The other road branched south from Tulls Creek, joining the earlier c.1733 road at the crossing of the North River; the current Ridge Road is thought to be along the general trace of this thoroughfare. By the time of the Revolutionary War, the old road to the Elizabeth River had become a secondary route with one stem leading to Indiantown and the other pushing to the south down the peninsula, following what is now the main highway N.C. 168.<sup>25</sup>

Waterways, however, were the main "roadways" in Currituck County. As one observer noted: "Farmers, along the sounds and rivers, own boats, as, in other places, they own horses, and a man must be poor, indeed, who has not even a 'cooner'—canoe dug from a solid log—in which he can carry his produce to market."<sup>26</sup> Almost all products moved on rivers and streams within the state, and most manufactured goods arrived by sea. Because the inlets in Currituck were shallow,

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<sup>25</sup> John Elliott Wood, "Report of the Historic Sites Committee," 2 January 1957, Currituck County Historical Society. *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1974, pp.39-40. See also 1733 Edward Mosely Map, 1770 partial map by John Collett, and 1775 partial map by Henry Mouzon, Jr.

<sup>26</sup> David, Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery And Freedom In Maritime North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001, p. 75.

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the early residents depended on small crafts to navigate from place to place. Small, flat bottomed boats known as “kunnners” built of split cypress logs that had been hollowed out and joined with timber planks easily handled the shallow waters of the sound. For a more rapid form of water transportation, a sail was attached to the kunner. Another common sight on the sound was the Periauger, built from wood planks or hollowed out logs. These vessels were considered to be excellent workboats; not only were they larger than the kunnners, but they could also handle the shallow waters of the sound as well as the open water of the ocean. In addition to the sound, one of the principal waterways in the mainland county during this period was Tulls Creek.<sup>27</sup>

Economic Development: Maritime Trades and Agriculture

North Carolina became a royal colony in 1729 when King George II purchased the land from the proprietors. Over the next several decades, the colony experienced its first real period of marked progress evidenced by a stable government, steady population growth, and improvements in transportation and agriculture. Settlements expanded, and many new counties and towns were established. By the mid-eighteenth century, Currituck was appointed one of five ports of entry in North Carolina with its own customs house located between the village of Currituck and Bells Island. It would become clear, however, that the port could not compete with larger and more accessible ports such as Norfolk, Virginia, a consequence that would dramatically impact the development of Currituck and that of the county. One historian described the port as “of little consequence, for the few vessels which put in there were small, and the cargoes inconsiderable.”<sup>28</sup> Whenever one came to the port to unload goods, the port master would simply be there to greet the vessel.

The principal exports of Port Currituck, like those of the other North Carolina ports during the colonial period, consisted overwhelmingly of naval stores, including tar, pitch and turpentine,

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<sup>27</sup> Penne Smith Sandbeck, “Historic Architecture Survey of the Outer Banks. Essay for Multiple Property Documentation Form: Currituck Banks, North Banks, and Roanoke Island,” NC Historic Architecture Survey, December 2002, p. 23-24.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Christopher Crittenden, *The Commerce of North Carolina 1763-1789*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936, p. 42

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sawn lumber, shingles, staves, and provisions, especially corn. Vessels entering the port came primarily from the northern colonies, the West Indies, and, to a lesser extent, directly from the British Isles. Many vessels trading with North Carolina were involved in a triangular pattern of commerce, sailing from a northern port to North Carolina, thence to the West Indies, and from there back again to their place of origin. Imports from Great Britain consisted mainly of manufactured goods, including large quantities of cloth. Also imported from Great Britain in considerable quantities were wide varieties of hardware items, household goods, and similar articles, ranging from scythes and saddles to looking glasses and playing cards. Imports from the West Indies were mainly rum, molasses, brown sugar, and salt, the last commodity coming almost entirely from Turks Island. Other goods from the West Indies included coffee, cocoa, citrus fruits, cotton, and pimento. Coming from other North American colonies were a wide variety of miscellaneous goods and foodstuffs, including large quantities of New England rum, molasses, sugar, and salt. A large portion of the goods brought to North Carolina from the northern colonies had first been obtained from the West Indies or Great Britain.<sup>29</sup>

One of the area's most prosperous industries was the McKnight Shipyard, in present-day Shawboro. A Scottish immigrant, McKnight had become a wealthy merchant with business interests in Norfolk, Virginia and extensive land holdings in Currituck and Pasquotank Counties. He described his shipyard, located near Indiantown Creek on the north side of the North River, as the "most commodious, and . . . best shipyard in the province" with "large warfs and convenient warehouses." Almost no documentation has survived detailing McKnight's operations. He did, however, offer a description of one of his ships: "From this yard I have launched a ship (one hundred feet long) into fourteen feet of water, upon sliding boards not more than thirty in length, the whole run did not exceed twenty-five feet; and from the top of the keel blocks to the surface of the water was a fall of little more than two feet."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 158-162.

<sup>30</sup> "Currituck County 1670-1970 Abstracts from Historical Notes," p. 109, Barbara B. Snowden, "Thomas McKnight, Local Tory, Caught "Betwix and Between," unpublished paper, December 14, 1982, John D. Neville, "Thomas McKnight," in William S. Powell, ed., Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, IV, 165,

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McKnight made his home at Belville, his 8,000-acre estate in Indiantown. The property included orchards, a ten-acre garden, and house, none of which have survived.<sup>31</sup>

Agricultural activity in Currituck County tended to be conducted only a little above the subsistence level, with farmers raising only what they needed to feed themselves, their families, and their livestock. It is possible that some of the early settlers attempted to cultivate exotic fruits, plants, or herbs that early promotional publications for the colonies claimed could be grown. With those failed efforts in mind, colonial farmers in Currituck turned their efforts to reliable crops introduced to them by the Native Americans such as corn, beans, squash, peas, and later wheat. Farmers also learned a valuable lesson from Native American groups about farming: instead of just breaking the ground and sowing seed as English farmers did, they learned to sow their seeds in careful rows or hills, maintain a vigilant watch over weeds, and tend their crops earnestly. Livestock was important to the livelihood of local farmers, too. Cattle, hogs, goats, chickens, sheep, ducks, and geese were common sights on many farms. Hog raising was particularly successful. Only in rare cases was livestock fenced in; in general the animals were allowed to roam. Farmers also planted cotton, though it did not become the main cash crop as in other areas of the state, and black leaf tobacco.<sup>32</sup>

Land was often quickly worn out; cultivating crops at this time demanded an almost constant supply of virgin soil. Land freshly cleared of trees was planted in tobacco for three years and then in corn, leaving the soil exhausted in a very short time. According to the historian Guion Griffis Johnson, in her book *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History*, the land in the area, including Currituck County, wore out in about eight years; less fertile areas were no longer usable

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Charles Christopher Crittenden, "Ships and Shipping in North Carolina, 1763-1789," *North Carolina Historical Review* (January 1931): 1-13, Robert O. DeMond, *The Loyalists in North Carolina During the Revolution*, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc, 1979, p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Snowden, "Thomas MacKnight, Local Tory," in Bates, Jo Anna Heath, ed, with the Albemarle Genealogical Society, Incs and the Currituck County Historical Society, Inc. *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985. p. 101-102.

<sup>32</sup> William S. Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, p. 132.

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after three. In the ongoing quest for more land, forests were then cleared and the unprofitable acres left to revert to nature.

Based on family records, the life of Thomas Cox offers one of the clearest pictures of life for a county resident. The son of a prosperous London merchant, Cox immigrated to the colonies in 1682. Around 1695, Cox moved his family to Currituck Precinct, where Thomas, his family, a friend, and eight free blacks purchased as head rights 640 acres on the south side of Moyock Creek in the northern end of the county. He built a house for his family and for almost five decades farmed, raising corn, vegetables, and hogs on his property, "Wolfpit Ridge." He traded with the Indians and was in part responsible for preventing hostilities against the tribes. According to colonial records, Cox was doing well; the 1714 Tax List records Cox's property as valued at £15 or roughly \$3600 today, a considerable sum by the day's standards. At the time of his death in 1743, Cox's personal property included land, livestock that was divided among his children, a house, a gun, and "one Large Puter [pewter] Dish," left to his daughter Mary.<sup>34</sup>

Other signs of civilization were appearing in the county. In 1723, the county authorized the construction of a courthouse, to be built by a Robert Peyton. Peyton, however, failed to comply with the building specifications. After local magistrates sued him for damages, Peyton's building was replaced. In 1768, the colonial assembly authorized funds for the county to "build a prison pillory and stocks in the said county on the lot where the court house stands."<sup>35</sup> Little is known about these two buildings or what they looked like; on May 31, 1803, the *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* reported that "the court-house, jail, and clerk's office in that county, with all the books and papers, were totally destroyed by a fire on Wednesday morning last."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1937, p.6.

<sup>34</sup> Norma R. Romm, "The Cox Family," in Bates, Jo Anna Heath, ed, with the Albemarle Genealogical Society, Inc. and the Currituck County Historical Society, Inc. *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, pp. 183-184, William Cox, Jr., "My Cox Ancesters in Currituck," in Murray, Jeanne Meekins, ed. *Histories of Currituck County, North Carolina Families*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 2005, pp. 56-58, Currituck County 1714 Land Tax Records, Will of Thomas Cox, July 5, 1743, located at: <http://www.ncgenweb.us/currituck/wills/coxthomas1743.html>

<sup>35</sup> *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Vol.7*, p. 623-624.

<sup>36</sup> *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, May 31, 1803, 3:1.

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**A Growing Community 1770-1820**

By 1775, areas of Currituck County had been settled for almost a century. A 1770 partial map by John Collett shows an area dotted with the names of small farmers and large landowners: Bray, Jones, Poiner [sic], Shergold, and Williams as well as the Currituck Courthouse. A c.1790 map contains even more names: Bray, Buckin [sic], Bunnill, Cave, In part the decline was due to factors beyond local control: continual marauding by pirates along the Outer Banks until 1725 and the passage of the Navigation Acts in 1661 and 1663, which mandated that all colonial produce was required to be exported in English vessels and that the colonies were prohibited from receiving goods carried in foreign vessels. These developments helped cripple any chance of economic growth and importance for the port of Currituck. The geography of the Sound also plagued the county. In a report to the Board of Trade of Great Britain in March, 1764, Arthur Dobbs complained of the shallow waters, stating “The second defect of this Province is the defenceless state of the Sea Coast, and the want of a sufficient depth of water for large Ships to carry away lumber and naval stores from the Northern parts of this Colony . . . . Currituck having only six feet water at high water.” The shallow waters were the result of a changing landscape. With the closing of old Currituck Inlet in 1726, the General Assembly appropriated monies to mark the entrance of the New Currituck

Inlet. The new inlet began silting badly, however, even though efforts were made to improve the situation in 1761. The shallows remained a challenge for ships.<sup>38</sup> Yet, ship traffic continued; in 1786, the Currituck Custom House reported visits by 194 schooners, 43 sloops, and 5 brigs.

To address Dobbs’s other concern—lack of protection for the county and the colony--a number of local militias were organized; the earliest recorded muster is for Captain William Bray’s company in 1748. According to law, the county militia was required to hold four company musters and one regimental muster to complete five days of training every year.

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur Dobbs, “Letter from Arthur Dobbs to the Board of Trade of Great Britain,” March 29, 1764 *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, Volume 6, Pages 1027.

<sup>38</sup> John B. Flowers and Ruth Little-Stokes, “Currituck County Jail National Register Nomination,” November, 1979.

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With the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, several local militiamen fought for Continental forces. The mainland portion of the county experienced little conflict, other than local residents keeping watch to make sure British troops did not come ashore to steal provisions or livestock. A hindrance to trade, Currituck's shallow waters now afforded protection against invasion. In a letter dated November 5, 1780, however, Colonel John Christian Senf wrote to General Thomas Benbury about possible British activity in the county and hinted at local reluctance to serve the revolutionary cause. "Yesterday I was at the County of Currituck & Indian Town, which is 28 miles from here. I have ordered the Militia of Currituck and\_\_[torn out]\_\_of Camden to make a stand at Tulley's [sic] Creek, but I don't know if they can muster 40 Men with arms, and the Inhabitants are much discontented by reconnoitering the County."<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, not all Currituck residents supported American Independence. Shipyard owner Thomas McKnight, a vocal Tory and member of the Assembly, was voted out of office in 1775 as an act of "civil excommunication." McKnight's growing unpopularity within the county led to the closing of his shipyard; he later fled the area because of the growing hostilities and an attempt on his life. His 8,000 acre plantation, Belville, was seized and sold. After the war, McKnight filed a claim to recover his losses in the sum of £23,183 but received only £3638 in compensation.<sup>40</sup>

Growth of the Local Economy

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Currituck residents were engaged in a variety of occupations ranging from farming and raising livestock to fishing and trapping. Also available were the rich resources of the forests. During the 1770s and 1780s, trees were everywhere. In Currituck, oaks and cypresses rose from the swamps, while elsewhere pines, oaks, walnut and

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<sup>39</sup> John Christian Senf, "Letter from John Christian Senf to Thomas Benbury, November 05, 1780, *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, Volume 15, Pages 144 – 145.

<sup>40</sup> "Currituck County 1670-1970 Abstracts from Historical Notes," p. 109-110, DeMond, Appendix D.

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other varieties stood. On a visit to the area during 1840-1841, the noted writer and agriculturist Edmund Ruffin described the pine forests and the economic possibilities they held:

One of the most remarkable and valuable qualities of some of the pines is, that their winged seeds are distributed by winds to great distances, and in great numbers so that every abandoned field is speedily and thickly seeded, and the kind of pine which is most favored by the soil and situation, in a few years covers the ground with its young plants. The growth, especially of the most common second-growth pine, (*p. taeda*.) is astonishingly rapid, and even on the poorest land. And while other land might still be bare of trees, that which favors this growth would be again under a new and heavy, though young, growth of pines. This offers, (especially in connexion with the use of calcareous manures,) the most cheap, rapid and effectual means for great improvement of poor soils. And besides this greatest end, the cover of the more mature wood, if marketable for fuel, will offer the quickest and greatest return of crop that could have been obtained from such poor and exhausted land.<sup>41</sup>

Such a plentiful resource offered a livelihood for many. Pines were hacked and notched for their sap to make turpentine; dead pines were split and baked as black tar oozed into scooped out holes. Tar was then boiled or burned to make pitch. All three products formed the basis for what would become a major industry of naval stores. Certain types of pine would do only for use as the masts of ships. Oak and cypress trees were cut to make into barrel staves and shingles to store naval products or other supplies. These goods were then transported over roads to Currituck port or any of the private landings and floated to market.<sup>42</sup>

The federal census of 1790 recorded a total population of 5,392 persons in Currituck County, with 792 heads of households; included in that number were 1,017 white males over the

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<sup>41</sup> Edmund Ruffin, *Agricultural, Geological and Descriptive Sketches of Lower North Carolina and the Similar Adjacent Lands*, Raleigh: Institution for the Deaf & Dumb & Blind, 1861, p. 253.

<sup>42</sup> Harry L. Watson, "The Forest, The Indians And The Yeoman Family," in Mobley, Joe A. ed. *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline, 2003, pp. 111-113.

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age of sixteen, 1,900 free white females, and 115 other free persons. Of that total population, slightly more than twenty percent, or 1,103, were slaves. By this time, slavery was an established institution in the county, having been introduced at the creation of the first settlements in the Albemarle; as early as 1710, 97 slaves were reported living in Currituck. Next to land, slaves were among the most valuable property a man, or woman, could own.<sup>43</sup>

Many slaves came to Currituck when their masters moved there from Virginia; others were brought into North Carolina ports, most commonly from the West Indies, and sold. As settlement spread, the number of both whites and blacks living in the county grew. Slaves worked in the maritime trades. They built and sailed boats. They fished and guided whites on duck hunts.

Little documentary evidence exists describing the life of the maritime slave in the county; however in 1882, a former slave named London R. Ferebee wrote his autobiography, *A Brief History of the Slave Life of Rev. L. R. Ferebee, and the Battles of Life, and Four Years of His Ministerial Life. Written from Memory. To 1882.* Ferebee was born in Big Ditch near Coinjock in August, 1849. His parents were the slaves of the Whitehurst family; young London was later sold to a Captain E. T. Cowles (or Cowells), in whose service he learned to sail. He recalled:

After leaving my mother, I had a rough life. Many hardships I had to undergo, as all young slave children had to suffer. I went by water with my master a good deal until I learned to man the vessel pretty well; even at night I could steer by the compass, or by any star. My master would point out to me, before he went to his bunk, and I've heard him tell gentlemen in my presence he could lie down as well satisfied with me at the helm as any one of the crew.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Federal Census 1790, p.9, Powell, p. 112.

<sup>44</sup> Reverend Lincoln Ferebee, *A Brief History of the Slave Life of Rev. L.R. Ferebee, and the Battles of Life, and Four Years of His Ministerial Life. Written from Memory. To 1882*, Raleigh: Edwards, Broughton & Co., Steam Printers, Publishers and Binders, 1882, pp. 7-8., located at: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/ferebee/ferebee.html><sup>45</sup>  
Harry L. Watson, "Planters and Slaves," in Mobley, Joe A. ed. *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003, pp. 148-149

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Like their counterparts in other southern states, the fear of slave rebellions was real for whites in Currituck. During the Revolutionary War, rumors spread that the British planned to arm the slaves against their masters. By 1800, the idea of slave insurrections had become a reality; in response to the thwarted slave rebellion planned by Gabriel Prosser in Henrico County, Virginia, the court in Currituck, along with eight other county courts, hanged a total of twenty-one slaves suspected of participating in a similar uprising, while numerous others were whipped.<sup>45</sup>

Not all blacks living in Currituck were slaves. As early as 1715, a free black man named John Smith, who owned 300 acres, was listed in the tax records.<sup>46</sup> In 1755, Isaac Miller, another free black, was listed in that year's tax roll. The 1800 census counted among the county residents mulattoes Sally Splman[sic] and her household of two, Jonathan Case, who had ten family members, and Thomas Dunkin, who had five family members and possibly two slaves.<sup>47</sup> In the end, free blacks fared little better than slaves; county law mandated that all free blacks be registered. Even this practice was unsatisfactory to the citizens of Currituck; by 1860, they demanded a state law that either expelled free blacks or returned them to slavery.<sup>48</sup>

By 1810, a modest textile manufacturing establishment had developed in Currituck County, which included 41,000 yards of blended and unnamed cloths and stuffs valued at \$11,000 and 400 looms. Still, unlike other counties, Currituck had no documented gunsmiths, blacksmiths, tanneries, or distilleries.<sup>49</sup> A thriving cypress shingle business was located in Moyock; trees were cut from the Dismal Swamp, fashioned into shingles at the village, and then

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<sup>45</sup> Harry L. Watson, "Planters and Slaves," in Mobley, Joe A. ed. *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003, pp. 148-149

<sup>46</sup> Currituck County Land Tax Records, 1715, located at: <http://www.ncgenweb.us/currituck/tax/1715land.html>

<sup>47</sup> 1800 Federal Census, Currituck County, pp. 138, 151, 168.

<sup>48</sup> Harry L. Watson, "Planters and Slaves," in Mobley, Joe A. ed. *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003, pp. 148-149, Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott, Flora J. Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, Raleigh NC: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002, p. 3, John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina 1790-1860*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 195, pp. 75, 218-219.

<sup>49</sup> Bureau of the Census, *A Series of Tables of the Several Branches of American Manufactures*, 1810, pp. 129-135.

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shipped from Shingle's Landing Creek. Some of the area's more prosperous citizen engaged in a variety of occupations. For example, in the southern part of the county (now Dare County) Willis H. Gallop of Martin's Point), who, by the early nineteenth century not only owned hundreds of acres, but also engaged in shipbuilding and the carrying trade. Gallop's vessels sailed to Baltimore as well as the West Indies from his own landing.<sup>50</sup>

Religion and Education

The early charters of the proprietors contained provisions for religious freedom, but because of the slow settlement in the Albemarle, the emergence of organized religious groups and churches was slow in coming. The lack of organized religious institutions meant that many county residents were never baptized; marriages were arranged by mutual consent and authorized by the Assembly. Although the Society of Friends, or Quakers, established a strong foothold in the Albemarle, they did not make inroads into Currituck. There is some documentation of religious gatherings in the county beginning as early as 1708, when an Anglican missionary group, the Society for Preservation of the Gospel, sent a minister, James Adams, to the area. Adams, who was paid £30 a year for his services, resided in the home of Tulls Creek resident Richard Sanderson. By 1712, a small chapel had been established at Indiantown, where a Reverend Rainsford preached. Three years later, in 1715, a vestry was named for Currituck Parish. Among its members were Richard Sanderson, Foster Jarvis, William Reed, William Swann, and William Willams. The church still lacked any permanent facility and instead held services wherever it could. One of the early schools in the area, the Currituck Seminary of Learning in Indiantown also served as a church in 1789, as did the local Masonic Hall.<sup>51</sup> In a letter dated July 9, 1748, missionary Clement Hall wrote of his success in finding converts in Currituck:

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<sup>50</sup> Alyce Sumrell, "Willis H. Gallop And Descendants," in Bates, Jo Anna Heath, ed, with the Albemarle Genealogical Society, and the Currituck County Historical Society, Inc. *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, p. 236.

<sup>51</sup> Wilton J. Walker, Jr., "The Early Church in Currituck," in Jo Anna Bates, ed, with the Albemarle Genealogical Society, Inc. and the Currituck County Historical Society, Inc. *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, pp. 70-71.

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I journey'd thro' my North Mission preach'd about 16 Sermons within 3 weeks and baptized about 347 Persons—the Congregation were more numerous in Currituck than heretofore & generally behave devout & orderly—We were obliged there several times to perform Divine Service under ye Shady Trees, the Chapels nor Court House being not large enough to contain one half of the People.<sup>52</sup>

In 1773, Thomas McKnight of Indiantown presented a petition to the Assembly to cover the expense of building a church in Currituck:

Be it therefore enacted by the Governor, Council and Assembly, and by the authority of the same, that two acres of land now the property of Thomas Macknight situate in the County of Currituck at a place called the Indian Town . . . and is hereby vested in Thomas Macknight, Isaac Gregory, Francis Williamson, Samuel Jarvis, William Ferribee, William McCormick and Thomas King, and their Successors forever, who are hereby constituted & appointed Trustees for the purposes hereinafter mentioned, that is to say to enclose the said two acres of land and to build thereon a commodious Chappel, to be called and known by the name of St Martin's Chappel, and to receive and take all such voluntary subscriptions and donations as religious and public spirited persons may think proper to bestow for the purpose of building and endowing the said Chappel, for enclosing of the Burying Ground and providing a fund for the maintenance of the poor.<sup>53</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, two religious groups dominated the county: the Methodists and the Baptists. The Baptist Church first emerged during 1727-1728 with the

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<sup>52</sup> Clement Hall, "Letter to Philip Bearcroft, July 9, 1748," *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Vol. 4*, p. 872.

"Bill proposed by Thomas Macknight concerning a church in Currituck County," *North Carolina Colonial Records, 1773 Volume 9*, Pages 638 – 640.

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establishment of the Shiloh Baptist Church in Indiantown. Cowenjock Baptist Church, located approximately one mile south of the Currituck Courthouse, was formed in 1780. The Baptist Society of Indian Ridge met in members' homes and later built the Providence Baptist Church in Shawboro. By 1801, the Powell's Point Mission, later to become the Powell's Point Baptist Church (CK0129), had been organized.<sup>54</sup>

As early as the 1770s, Methodist circuit riders were traveling through Currituck County. Among the most famous Methodist preachers was Joseph Pilmoor, one of two Englishmen whom John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, had sent to the American colonies. Pilmoor traveled south into North Carolina in 1772; his first stop was near the old Currituck Courthouse where he preached in September. For his sermon at Currituck he chose a verse from the Gospel of Matthew: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matt. 3:11). He recorded in his diary that he had dined with Colonel Hollowell Williams, a resident of Tulls Creek, who was among the first prominent supporters of the Methodist Church in Currituck. Pilmoor returned to the area in December where he preached at a chapel in Tulls Creek, again staying with Williams.<sup>55</sup> A visit by Edmund Drumgoole, another Methodist circuit rider, in 1783 resulted in the naming of one of the communities in Currituck: Sligo. So taken was Drumgoole with the landscape that he called it after his home in Sligo, Ireland.<sup>56</sup>

Like formal religion, education in Currituck County had humble beginnings. Institutionalized education was almost non-existent; what education children did receive came from their parents. Children of the wealthy might have private tutors or be sent away to school. Sometimes a wealthy landowner might build a community schoolhouse if he had several children of his own to educate. In many cases, a school was obtained through subscription from

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<sup>54</sup> Walker, pp. 70-71.

<sup>55</sup> Margaret C. Pritchard, *History of Methodism in Currituck County, North Carolina 1772-1972*, self-published manuscript, 1972.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Walker Hudson, "Sligo," in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1977, p. 205, C. H. Crookshank, M.A., *History of Methodism in Ireland Vol. 1*, Belfast: R.S. Allen, Son & Allen-University House, 1885, p.240.

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local residents. If they raised enough money to build a school, it could subsequently be transformed into an academy; these schools generally were chartered by the Legislature and governed by a board of trustees. By the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the academy movement was flourishing in North Carolina. Between 1800 and 1860, the Legislature chartered 287 academies; almost every county in the state had at least one.<sup>57</sup> The earliest school, known as the Indiantown Academy, was built around 1761 on the grounds of William Ferebee's plantation.<sup>58</sup> The only example of an academy school in Currituck was the Currituck Seminary of Learning, established in 1789 in Indiantown (now Shawboro), which was the most prominent settlement in Currituck at the time. Not much is known about the actual architecture of the school, other than it was a two-story building, which not only housed a school, but also a church and a Masons' Hall. The school was held in the lower story with the church and the Masons' using the upper story. Another account of the period states that a board of Trustees were appointed to oversee the running of the institution and to attend to the existing "building or purchasing of suitable and convenient houses, purchasing a library and philosophical apparatus, and supporting and paying the salaries of the provost and such number of professors and tutors as to them shall seem necessary."<sup>59</sup>

Architecture

Though no buildings survive from the earliest period of settlement, it is likely that "earthfast" construction techniques were used to build the first dwellings. These wood structures employed low framing members that rested directly on the ground or were embedded in postholes or shallow trenches. Clad by four to five foot riven clapboards, these dwellings were of the rudest

<sup>57</sup> Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1937, pp. 284-285.

<sup>58</sup> Mrs. Hollis Kannenberg, "The Migration of My Ferebee Ancestor," in Jo Anna Bates, ed, with the Albemarle Genealogical Society, Inc. and the Currituck County Historical Society, Inc. *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, p. 216-217.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Lee Smith, *The History of Education in North Carolina*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1888, p. 45.; Catherine Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle*, Raleigh: Society of North Carolina Society Daughters of the Revolution, 1914, in Chapter XIV, "Currituck, Haunt of the Wild Fowl," n.p.

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sort with dirt floors, offered little protection from the elements, and were subject to rot and termites because of the planted wood posts.

Log construction first appeared in coastal Carolina during the late seventeenth century. The structures were small and simple, generally consisting of little more than a single room. Log houses also took comparatively little time to build; within one to two days, a settler could look forward to having some sort of semi-permanent or permanent shelter. Log construction also did not rely on the skills of carpenters or other artisans, thus making the buildings fairly cheap. But by 1800, many considered log buildings to be old-fashioned; by the Civil War, log constructed buildings were only for the poor. Today, historic log-constructed houses are difficult to find; what few remain have often been incorporated into larger houses. Although the earliest of dwellings built in Currituck County were log, no such buildings were documented during the course of the survey.

Of particular interest is the home's hall-parlor interior, though to be one of perhaps two surviving examples of a late Georgian-style interior. The two-story, side-gable, single-pile house features heavy random plank flooring and original dado, with raised panels and a molded wainscot cap. The focal point for each room is the floor-to-ceiling, wood, raised paneled [NOTE: Text missing here] the primacy of that room compared to the smaller and less ornate decoration of the parlor room.

Another of the county's oldest surviving dwellings, and a good example of a very early nineteenth-century waterman's dwelling, is the Alex Dunton House (CK0290) on Narrow Shore Road in Aydlett. Built by Dunton's father, Leven, the dwelling, set back from the road and facing the water, is a story- and-a-half, two-bay house with heavy timber frame construction, sheathed in plain and beaded weatherboard. Dating from the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the original front block of the house consisted of one room with tongue-and-groove pine floors. The six-over-six wood sash windows feature hand-hewn sills. A photo of the house taken during the early 1960s shows the front shed roof porch as partially enclosed. A small

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frame breezeway connects to a frame-and weatherboard detached kitchen that was built in the mid-nineteenth century.

Home to many of the county's earliest and wealthiest residents, Shawboro, of all the areas in Currituck County, is the richest and most diverse architecturally with regard to buildings constructed in the early years of the nineteenth century. Culong, the 1812 residence built by wealthy landowner Thomas Cooper Ferebee Sr. (CK0006), is noted for its reserved Federal styling. Ferebee, a prosperous landowner whose family owned much of the land in the Indiantown area owned 280 acres and, by the 1830s, forty-three slaves, making him one of the largest slaveholders in the area. His house, a two-and-a-half story, three bay dwelling, rests on an English basement foundation, the only one of its kind in the county, and was originally sheathed with cypress weatherboard. Further distinguishing Culong from its neighbors is its front-gable roof orientation, in an area where the side-gable roof form dominated. At one time, two rear exterior end brick chimneys with double shoulders were attached to the rear gable-end wall. The interior of the house also breaks with the more traditional hall-parlor plan in its long entrance cross-hall.

A similar interior plan is seen in the John Humphries House (CK 0052) and the Cosey Etheridge House (CK0032), both built in 1820 not far from Culong. The homes were originally part of the larger Ferebee land holdings; according to some sources, the house was one of six built along similar lines as Culong. Like William Ferebee, John Humphries was a wealthy landowner.

The c. 1820 Twin Houses (CK0003), is unique in the state in terms of its massing, which consists of two identical frame, two-story, five-bay wide, side-gable buildings. The exterior end brick shouldered chimneys feature smooth tumbled weatherings that often mark Federal-style houses. Each interior features a hall-parlor plan with reeded chair rails and plaster walls and simple Federal-style mantles. Connecting the two dwellings is a one-story, frame and side-gable hall. A John Perkins built the property; its unusual footprint has been attributed to an arrangement in which Perkins and his wife resided in one house and his son in the other.

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Another of the few surviving Federal-style dwellings in the county is the c.1801 John Sanderson House (CK0079) on Tulls Creek Road. John Sanderson Sr., the son of early Currituck settler Richard Sanderson, was a wealthy land and slaveowner in the Tulls Creek and Moyock area. The two-and-a-half-story, three-bay, frame Federal-style dwelling was originally sheathed in beaded weatherboard; a stretcher bond brick veneer was added sometime in the late twentieth century. An unusually wide, exterior end chimney laid in Flemish bond with double shoulders, has a date brick of "1801." Unusual features of the house are seen in the two corner chimney fireplaces on the first and second floors, each with simple paneled surrounds.

The exteriors of houses with the hall-parlor plan admitted a number of variations. The two-story, five bay, c.1815 J. P. Morgan House (CK0010) and the now-demolished two-story, three-bay, frame and weatherboard Samuel Ferebee House (CK0043) in Shawboro built sometime in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, feature two side-by-side front single-leaf, raised four-paneled front entrance doors, allowing family members and guests to enter directly into either room on the façade. The Morgan House was also distinguished by two exterior, shouldered, brick end chimneys laid in 7/1 bond. The original first floor 9/6 pegged sash windows are intact, with their heavy molded wood surrounds. The hall mantelpiece consists of a simple Federal-style wood surround with complex moldings and simple square pilasters. Double-shouldered brick exterior end chimneys laid in five-over-one bond, an unusual chimney type in the county, marked the Ferebee House.<sup>60</sup>

A kitchen (CK0338), is one of the oldest surviving outbuildings is found in Sligo on the Cowell farm property. Dating to approximately 1780, the building retains its original weatherboard siding, vertical board door and hewn sill plate; the original chimney is gone. An interesting grouping of outbuildings, the McKnight Outbuildings (CK0061) in Shawboro, so-called after the original owner of the property, Thomas McKnight's owner of the eighteenth-century plantation, Belville. In reality, the only outbuilding that may survive from this early colonial period is the one-

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<sup>60</sup> "Samuel Ferebee House," North Carolina State Survey, September 8, 1972.

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story, mortise-and-tenon framed kitchen located to the north of the main house. Originally clad in beaded board siding, the front-gable roof building rests on a brick foundation with a brick floor. Rosehead nails are still in evidence.

There are other surviving domestic outbuilding scattered throughout the county, including a few detached kitchens such as those seen at the Twin Houses (CK0003) in Shawboro and the Caleb Bell House (CK0017) in Snowden. Both of these buildings appear to have been built during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Constructed of heavy timber and covered with beaded weatherboard, the side-gable roof buildings also had a large exterior brick chimney with shoulders. Although the kitchen building at the Twin Houses is in poor condition, enough of the building has survived to suggest that it was of similar proportions and plan to that found at the Caleb Bell property.

**Currituck County 1820-1860**

The lack of primary and secondary resources dealing with the history of the county makes the period 1820 to 1860 difficult to reconstruct. Perhaps the best picture of Currituck comes from the observations of travelers such as Edmund Ruffin, a writer and agriculturist, who traveled throughout the Tidewater during the early 1840s and from the Federal Census. During this period, too, the county was written about in passing in some of the nation's leading magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*.

During this period, the population of the county continued to grow. According to the Federal Census of 1820, 8,098 persons resided in the county; of that number, 1,050 were identified as heads of households; twelve foreigners made their homes in the county. Of the African-American population, 1,854, or 22.8 percent, were slaves and 146 were free persons; 807 were engaged in agriculture, 302 in commerce, and 127 in manufacturing. This population also included people and their activities on Roanoke Island.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Federal Census, 1820, p. 112.

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Commerce and Agriculture

The maritime landscape of Currituck was also changing. During the course of his visit to North Carolina, Edmund Ruffin had an opportunity to learn about Currituck Inlet:

Formerly, and to within a recent time, the old Currituck inlet was deep enough for vessels drawing more than ten feet. Mr. B. T. Simmons, a respectable gentleman residing in Currituck county, informed me that he had sailed through this inlet in 1821, when it afforded throughout from ten to twelve feet depth of channel. It afterwards was more and more filled by sand, drifted by both wind and waves; and finally, in 1828, it was entirely closed by a single violent gale. The site of the former water-way, once more than a half mile wide, is said to be now diked across, the full breadth of the sand reef; and either very near or on the place, there has been raised by the wind a range of high sand hills.<sup>62</sup>

Ruffin also noted that the only waterway available for commercial shipping was the Dismal Swamp Canal, as the Sound was becoming increasingly shallow. With the closing of the old Currituck Inlet during the 1790s, the only vessels able to navigate the sound's waters were smaller craft. The makeup of the Sound's waters had also changed. Initially, the Inlet's water was salty; with its closing in 1828, the Sound was now fed by freshwater sources, yielding "rich yet firm marsh, covered by a luxuriant growth of water grasses," although the once abundant oyster beds and fish that lived in the salt water died. Livestock thrived in the area, however, grazing on the marshes and acquiring "habits suited to their aquatic position--and wade and partly swim from one island to another, when separated by water of more than half a mile in width."<sup>63</sup> There was no farming conducted along the banks of the Sound. As

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<sup>62</sup> Edmund Ruffin, Agricultural, *Geological and Descriptive Sketches of Lower North Carolina and the Similar Adjacent Lands*, Raleigh: Institution for the Deaf & Dumb & Blind, 1861, p. 116.

<sup>63</sup> Ruffin, p. 117.

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Ruffin described the area, "there is no grain or field culture on the reef, as far as to opposite Powell's Point, the southern extremity of Currituck county and the sound."<sup>64</sup>

Ruffin also had the opportunity to visit with a member of the Gallop family,<sup>65</sup> who resided in the southern portion of the county, and his description offers one of the fuller pictures of the life of a big planter in Currituck County. According to Ruffin, Gallop was:

a cultivator of more surface than all the other proprietors put together, south of Knott's island. Though his land is of the usual loose blowing sand, it produces crops of 2,000 to 2,500 bushels of corn. Most of the ordinary culinary vegetables grow well on the best of these sandy soils, and there are abundant resources of manure, in the old Indian banks of shells, and immense quantities of fish caught in the seines, and worthless for other purposes, to make a rich material for compost manure. . . . There were oaks and other trees of smaller size, and healthy growth. I was informed that live-oaks, large enough for ship timber had been formerly cut down here, for that use.<sup>66</sup>

By 1830, the population in the county numbered 7,655 persons. Of that total 5,467 residents were documented as free and 28.5 percent, or 2,188, as slaves. Given the agricultural practices of the time and the crops cultivated, slave labor was almost a necessity for a number of farmers in the mainland county. Compared to nearby counties, Currituck was comparable in population; nearby Camden claimed 6733 residents, of which 4708 persons were free and 2025 persons were slaves. The counties of Perquimons and Pasquotank numbered 7419 and 8641 persons respectively. The number of free persons in Perquimons County was 4670, for Pasquotank, 6020. Slaves in Perquimons County numbered 2749, the largest number of all four counties. Pasquotank counted 2621 slaves among its 1830 population.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 127.

<sup>65</sup> It is not known which member of the Gallop family Ruffin met; based on family records, it may have been Willis H. or his son, Reverend Hodges Gallop.

<sup>66</sup> Ruffin, pp. 128-129.

<sup>67</sup> Federal Census, 1830, p. 19-20.

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By 1840, the population had decreased; only 6,703 persons were recorded in the 1840 census; the decrease reflected a state-wide trend as people, searching for more land or better opportunities, left the state. Still, the agricultural economy of Currituck was diverse and rich. According to the 1840 census, the county employed four men engaged in the production of 400 pounds of salt. Livestock was still an important component of local farming; the census recorded 1,109 horses and mules, 5,919 cattle, 4,590 sheep, 13,220 hogs, and 6,372 poultry. The grain harvest included 7,685 bushels of wheat, 1,308 bushels of rye, and 7,084 bushels of oats. County farmers produced more than 213,000 bushels of corn and 52,000 pounds of potatoes. Other related industries, such as wool production, yielded 11,465 pounds. In manufacturing, however, the county lagged behind; no type of manufacturing enterprise for the county was recorded in the census.<sup>68</sup>

Compared to the neighboring counties of Camden, Pasquotank and Perquimans, the lack of manufacturing seemed to be indicative this region of northeastern North Carolina. Of the four counties, Camden, with an 1840 population of 3730 persons appeared to have the least number of resources in 1840, numbering only 1085 horses and mules, 4149 head of cattle, 2672 sheep, 12,562 pigs, but more poultry with almost double the number of chickens at 14,194. And although Currituck produced more wheat than Camden's 2739 bushels, Camden's corn crop was higher with 9480 bushels harvested. The more prosperous counties of Pasquotank (5735 persons) and Perquimans (4403 persons) had slightly more horses and mules (1570 and 1645 respectively) but roughly equal the number of cattle (5719 and 6335), and sheep (3415 and 4766). More pigs were raised in the two counties (15605 and 19, 193), but fewer chickens (5858 and 5159). Corn and wheat production were markedly higher as well with Pasquotank harvesting 19,130 bushels of wheat and 45,101 bushes of corn, and Perquimans harvesting 35, 849 bushels of wheat and 22, 068 bushels of corn.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Federal Census, 1830, p. 19, Federal Census 1840, pp. 178-189.

<sup>69</sup> Federal Census 1840, pp. 40-41, 178-189.

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Maritime commerce, though, continued to flourish, especially fishing. In 1840, fisheries packed 400 barrels of pickled fish. In 1853, the noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted journeyed throughout the South, recording his observations on a variety of subjects. He visited Currituck where his host showed him some of the fisheries:

The shad and herring fisheries upon the sounds and inlets of the North Carolina coast are an important branch of industry, and a source of considerable wealth. The men employed in them are mainly negroes, slave and free . . . . The largest sweep seines in the world are used. The gentleman to whom I am indebted for the most of my information, was the proprietor of a seine over two miles in length. It was manned by a force of forty negroes, most of whom were hired at a dollar a day, for the fishing season, which . . . lasts fifty days. . . .Cleaning, curing and packing-houses are erected on the shore, as near as they conveniently may be to a point on the beach suitable for drawing the seine. Six or eight windlasses, worked by horses, are fixed along the shore, on each side of this point. There are two large seine-boats, in each of which there is one captain, two seine-tenders, and eight or ten oarsmen. In making a cast of the net, one-half of it is arranged on the stern of each of the boats, which, having previously been placed in a suitable position--perhaps a mile off shore, in front of the buildings--are rowed from each other, the captains steering, and the seine-tenders throwing off, until the seine is all cast between them.<sup>70</sup>

A more definitive agrarian way of life in the county had emerged by 1850. The population had grown once again to 7,236 persons, 4,590 whites, 190 free blacks, and 2,447 slaves. There were 926 families living in 995 dwellings. The county was still overwhelmingly agricultural: 405 farms were recorded with a total of 37,405 acres under cultivation and a total land value of \$758,401. The number of cattle and hogs had more than doubled; the census recorded

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<sup>70</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States; With Remarks on Their Economy*, New York; London: Dix and Edwards; Sampson Low, Son & Co., 1856, pp.352-353.

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more than 15,000 head of cattle and 35,281 hogs. Corn was still the largest crop with almost 223,000 bushels harvested. For the first time, Irish and sweet potatoes appeared in the census; according to the document 74,199 Irish and sweet potatoes were grown. More than 20,000 pounds of butter and cheese were made and 30,950 pounds of flax collected. Cotton production totaled 12,284 bales each weighing approximately 400 pounds. Manufacturing was still not a large undertaking in the county.<sup>71</sup>

As a county seat, Currituck Courthouse was a bustling village, despite the fact that the settlement consisted of only five houses, which, by 1855, included the Simmons-Granberry House (CK0039) and the Walker Cottage (0083), as well as the Courthouse (CK0004) and the Jail (CK0007). In an engraving done for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in May 1859, there also appears a one-story, frame building located near the water's edge that may have been a commercial property of some sort. The accompanying article described the author's visit to the village while court was in session. Among the many sights he witnessed was how the residents traveled about:

From dawn till noon, therefore, did the yeomanry of Currituck and the attorneys of the nearest villages, twenty miles distant, pour in. Among the whole procession a "solitary horseman" would have required hard search to find.

Everybody went on wheels. . . . they might challenge the world to match their buggies, sulkies, rockaways, carts, horses, mules, and shaft-oxen. There are no wagons. . . . Like everything else here, they—the carts and the horses—are amphibious. Scorning the superfluous luxury of a wharf, they meet the boats half-way. Backing into three feet of water, the vehicle is tilted into the vessel.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Federal Census 1850, pp. 279-283.

<sup>72</sup> "Loungings In The Footsteps Of The Pioneers," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, No. CVIII, May 1859, Vol. XVIII, p. 760.

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The courts met twice a year in a large house located near the Courthouse. According to the *Harper's* account, the spring term was known as "Cherry Court," from the large quantities of the fruit everyone ingested, which led the magazine correspondent to comment that it was a wonder that anyone lived until June, as "bowel complaint" could "decimate" the populace.<sup>73</sup> Fall Court was known as "Chinquapin Court" for the large numbers of the nuts that were consumed. Visitors were often put up at local houses.

The Albemarle & Chesapeake Canal

Water traffic increased with the construction of the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal built in the area now occupied by Highway 158 and the village of Coinjock. First authorized in 1772, fifteen years prior to the Dismal Swamp Canal, its early history can be characterized as all "acts" and no action. No less than ten acts were passed in both Virginia and North Carolina over a period of eighty-three years before construction finally began in 1855, with \$350,000 provided by the North Carolina State legislature. The new waterway was supposed to provide more efficient commercial traffic between North Carolina and Virginia as it would be wider and deeper than any others, to accommodate the large steam ships that had become more common on the waters. When the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal was finished in 1859, it was an engineering marvel. It consisted of only one lock, unlike the seven locks of the Dismal Swamp Canal, and two relatively short man-made channels, the Virginia Cut and the North Carolina Cut. The single lock, which balanced lunar tides of the southern branch of the Elizabeth River with the wind driven ones of the North Landing River and Currituck Sound, was forty feet wide and 220 feet long, the longest along the Atlantic coast and the second largest in the entire U.S. To mark the event, the newly-built steamship *Calypso*, traveling on her maiden voyage from Norfolk to Currituck, made the first canal passage. The opening of the canal brought regular commercial traffic through the sound. Sloops, paddlewheel steamers, modern barges, and recreational vessels sailed Currituck's waters.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

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The importance of the canal cannot be underestimated. Edmund Ruffin, who watched the construction of the canal, remarked that the canal would provide a route “cheaper, safer, and preferable in every respect,” bringing products to North Carolina “cheaply, safely, and speedily.” Further, with the canal’s ability to accommodate larger ships, “the cargoes may be carried safely, and without trans shipment, to any port on our Atlantic coast, or to the West-Indies.”<sup>74</sup>

In 1860, the mainland county population had increased, but only modestly. The total population was 7,415, an increase of approximately 200 persons. Of the free population 4,669 were white, 98 were black, and 125 mulatto; slaves numbered 2,471 black and 52 mulatto. More than 100,000 acres were being farmed at a total value of almost \$1.2 million; approximately 68,000 acres were unimproved. Corn continued to be the major cash crop with 425,502 bushels harvested. Three thousand fifty pounds of tobacco were grown. Potatoes were another successful crop; by 1860, over 14,000 pounds of Irish potatoes and 64,433 pounds of sweet potatoes were harvested. The census also noted that 83 gallons of wine were made.<sup>75</sup> The 1860 census marked the first time that occupations were listed; a casual glance through the various areas of the county shows that farming was the most prevalent occupation. There were also mechanics, seamstresses, carpenters, doctors, spinners, watermen, and seamen.<sup>76</sup>

Education and Religion

By the mid-nineteenth century, Currituck had seven Methodist and five Baptist churches; in 1850, 7,900 persons in the county were attending church. During the antebellum period, however, both denominations began to splinter. Many denominations in mainland Currituck built their first churches during the antebellum period, though very few have survived in anything like their original form. One of the few is the Moyock Methodist Church (CK0245) that was built sometime after 1844 and is one of the oldest standing Greek Revival buildings in the county. In Tulls Creek, a much plainer church, the Baxter’s Grove Methodist Episcopal Church, was built in 1860.

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<sup>74</sup> Ruffin, pp. 131-132.

<sup>75</sup> Federal Census 1860, pp. 104-107, 356-358.

<sup>76</sup> Federal Census 1860.

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According to custom, many of the church buildings had separate entrances for men and women. The Christian Home Baptist Church (CK0228) was organized in 1842, while in Shawboro, the New Providence Baptist Church was founded in 1862.<sup>77</sup>

Public education finally emerged in North Carolina in 1839, when the state organized a school system under the Public School Law. The citizens of each county could vote to tax themselves to support education; if a county voted for schools, the county court was to draw school districts and appoint school committees. Though no records exist as to when mainland Currituck County opened its first public school, by 1846, every county had at least one school. The census of 1850 reported that the county had 305 students attending public school; the number does not include private academies such as Indiantown that was still in operation. The census also found that the county was spending a total of \$1,471 for education. Still, the majority of county residents, both black and white, were unable to read or write. In addition to the Indiantown Academy, a "Male and Female" School was established near Currituck Courthouse in 1856. Students could enroll in a number of courses during a term; the school offered reading, writing, and spelling for seven dollars, geography and grammar for ten; classics and mathematics were the most expensive, costing twelve dollars a term.<sup>78</sup>

Architecture

By the eve of the Civil War, the county had been settled for almost two centuries. Even though the area was gradually acquiring the basic elements of civilization and settlement, the mainland remained overwhelmingly rural, and the area did not see the emergence of many towns. Small settlements were springing up; with them came other institutions such as churches, schools, and a county courthouse. The architecture of this period illustrated the growing

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<sup>77</sup> Wilton J. Walker, Jr. "The Early Church in Currituck," in *The Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, p. 71.

<sup>78</sup> Gordon Cowley Jones, "The Introduction of Modern Education Into Currituck County, North Carolina," in Currituck County Historical Society. *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1974, pp. 58-60.

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distinctions of economic and social class in the county. Those individuals with money began building houses that alluded to their wealth and taste, as seen in the emergence of newer architectural styles, details, and craftsmanship. Between 1820 and 1860, some of the grander houses of the county appeared in the northern end around Moyock and Currituck. The southern end of the county is harder to describe since many of the houses from the period 1820-1860 are gone. Many of these homes were associated with large farms or plantations which had outbuildings and, in some cases, slave quarters. Unfortunately, in almost every case, the house is the only remaining resource, which many times have also undergone alterations of some sort.

The period also reflected new attitudes in building that were taking shape in the state and the nation. As the new United States of America and North Carolina lurched along in the quest for prosperity and identity, the sense that buildings not only reflect status or taste, but moral values as well became increasingly evident. Using brick to build public buildings, for example, promoted not only durability and safety, but also illustrated the progress and wealth of the community. In Currituck, the construction of the new courthouse, built sometime before 1869, and its jail, rebuilt in 1857, demonstrate the county's commitment to these principles. The gradual acceptance of the Greek Revival style, which promoted democracy and equality, as well as a clarity, order, and simplicity, through its allusions to ancient Greece was important in the architectural history of the county. Whereas the early Federal architecture drew from Palladio and the Renaissance, the Greek Revival's inspiration came from the Greek orders, ornament and proportions characterized by a simple symmetry, weatherboard sheathing, columned porticos, front-gabled (or temple-front) facades, pediments, entablatures, cornices and the color white, the style was enthusiastically adopted by Americans of both grand and modest means.

For those wealthy planters who adopted the style for their own homes, it offered a visible and physical statement of a prevailing order in their world. For middle-class whites, too, the style held great appeal. Adding small details to older houses, such as transom lights,

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columns or other classical touches, suggested not only refinement, but reinforced a kind of conservatism as well. The gradual leaving behind of the hall-parlor plan, although not completely abandoned, for a center-hall plan also spoke to a growing sense of formality and control over space.

Without a doubt one of the most elegant homes in the county is the Northern-Cox House (CK0024) in western Moyock. The Greek Revival influence is restrained, but unmistakable in the c.1855 house built by Philip Northern, one of the wealthiest landowners in the northern end of the county. The framing suggests that for many North Carolinians the heavy timber frame was still a staple in building practices. Little is known of Philip Northern except that he was a man of some means. The two-and-a-half-story, five bay dwelling, sheathed in weatherboard is a rare survivor of a pre-Civil War double pile house in the county, and is the only house with paired interior end brick chimneys. The approximately 4,500 square-foot interior of the Cox House is almost completely intact featuring a central hall plan and approximately ten-foot-high ceilings. Interior details not seen anywhere else in Currituck County today include Greek Revival pedimented and shouldered surrounds with battered sides that adorn all the door and window openings. Four-foot wide paneled pocket doors separate the dining room from the parlor area. The centerpiece of the house is the elegant center-hall staircase with a Greek Revival styled round newel post.

Another Currituck house combining Greek Revival elements is the Wilson-Broegler House (CK0021), built by wealthy planter Samuel Wilson in 1852 in Moyock. Clad in plain weatherboard, with a side-gable roof, the two-story, five bay house features an unusual chimney formation consisting of three exterior chimneys: a single exterior chimney on one gable end and paired exterior chimneys on the other, an arrangement seen elsewhere in the county only at the Wolcott House (CK0080) that was constructed roughly around the same time.

Other interesting characteristics of the Wilson-Broegler House include chimneys with an intricate tumbled brickwork pattern found between the shoulders and the stack areas and a one-story, one bay Greek Revival-styled porch with a pedimented front-gable roof supported by

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slightly battered and fluted square columns. The center-hall plan interior features ovolo-molded door and window surrounds and baseboards, fireplace surrounds with raised panels, Ionic cornices, and fluted pilasters. The central staircase is one of the most expressive features of the house; the open, quarter-turn staircase has a rounded, gooseneck rail of a type similar to those seen in early nineteenth-century pattern book designs of Asher Benjamin. The house's interior rivals that of the Northern-Cox House as one of the most exuberant and best preserved examples of an antebellum dwelling.

Though little is known about its origins, a two-story porch makes the c.1850 Simmons-Morris House (CK0331) a unique single-family house in Barco. This modest Greek Revival dwelling is sheathed in plain weatherboard, with double cornerboards<sup>79</sup> accentuating the walls. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal, has overhanging eaves with heavy cornice returns, a boxed cornice, and a simple frieze. Unlike many of the houses in the county that favored a central entrance, the Simmons-Morris House has a side entrance door with its original four-light transom and two-light paneled sidelights. Molded wood drip hoods are found over the 2/2 wood sash windows. The interior side-hall plan, one of the few in the county, is relatively intact and features a parlor fireplace surround with scrolled brackets and a central molded, incised panel.

In the village of Currituck is the small, unassuming, one-story, triple-A roof house known as the Walker Cottage (CK0083). The small L-shaped, frame dwelling retains many of its original exterior features. Built c. 1860, the house is thought to have been constructed from the scraps of an older dwelling that once stood on the site of the Walker-Snowden House (CK0082) and had been destroyed by fire. The plan of the building is unique; the four rooms each have their own entrance doors, in addition to a single door located in southeast corner at the rear of the house. It has been suggested that the house was constructed in this way because of fear of fire; with this plan everyone was assured of a way out. A much more likely

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<sup>79</sup> A pair of wood boards installed in an L-shape at the outside corner of buildings covered with wood siding such as clapboard, or weatherboard.

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possibility is that the plan resulted from the alterations made after the Walkers moved out of the cottage to the adjoining house, and the rooms were rented to persons doing business at the courthouse.

Though given an 1869 building date, there is evidence to suggest that the Samuel McHorney House (CK0014) in Barco was constructed earlier. McHorney, a former sea captain and farmer, bought the property in 1861. The house appears to have been first sided with wood vertical board; this was later covered over by beaded weatherboard. Attached to the rear of the building is a two-story frame and partially beaded weatherboard addition; the addition is believed to have formerly been a slave quarters that was later moved to the building. The home is a good example of a hall-and-parlor plan, I-house, one of the most prevalent house forms in Currituck County. The two front single-leaf, wood six-panel doors located at the north and south ends of the west front elevation opened into a parlor and sitting room respectively. Original interior features include random width plank floors, the simple mantel surrounds found in the hall; the house's interior doors retain their original locks and knobs.

Though not nearly as elegant as more high-style examples, the Sally Owens House (CK0066) in Poplar Branch is a good vernacular representation of a coastal cottage house type seen throughout the coastal plain of North Carolina during the first half of the nineteenth century. Although the origins of the house remain obscure, it is believed to have been constructed around 1860 by Charles Williams Owens, a small farmer and hunter. Covered with plain weatherboard with double cornerboards and a broken-pitch side-gable roof, the house is reminiscent of the "piazza" vernacular house form with its engaged front porch and slightly tapered wood columns. Variations on the form, including the Owens House, often had a rear shed porch that was later enclosed. The house's interior plan was a hall-parlor, showing the persistence of that particular design well into the mid-nineteenth century.

Certainly among the earliest surviving buildings in the county are the McKnight Outbuildings (CK0061) in Shawboro. The seven outbuildings, consisting of an office, smokehouse, kitchen, shed, and three barns, span approximately seventy-five years of agricultural

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outbuilding construction, dating from approximately 1775 to 1850. First documented in a 1972 survey, the outbuildings have remained relatively intact, though all have undergone some alterations and deterioration.

However, the property's name is somewhat misleading. With the exception of the kitchen building, the other frame outbuildings appear to date from a later nineteenth-century owner of the property, Dr. Gideon Marchant, include his office, a one-story, frame, front-gable building, a smokehouse to the south of the main house, and to the north, located side-by-side, three frame barns all built by ca. 1850. Although the original house no longer stands, a c.1893 two-story frame I-house was built on the original site of Dr. Marchant's house. Taken together, the house, along with its collection of domestic dependencies and barns, offer an interesting picture of what was doubtless a typical middling farm in the county.

**Civil War**

By 1860, the political climate in North Carolina was tense. Overwhelmingly rural and agrarian, North Carolina had few towns or cities of any size; economic growth overall had been slow with almost no new settlement. Unlike states such as South Carolina, Georgia, or Mississippi, where cotton reigned, North Carolina farmers relied on a variety of crops to make their living; even large slaveholders were reluctant to rely on one crop to sustain their way of life. Seventy-two percent of the white families in the state owned no slaves, and most farms were small, self-sufficient operations encompassing no more than fifty to one hundred acres.

Few leaders of the state shared the secessionists' alarm about southern rights. As the states of lower South seceded one by one and came together to organize the Confederate States of America, even large slaveholders felt dismay over the changing political climate. On February 28, 1861, North Carolina voters cast ballots on the question of calling a convention to consider secession. Although Governor John W. Ellis favored, and was working for, secession, the voters refused to hold a convention. When war became a reality after the attack on Fort Sumter, however, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill

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for a convention, and on May 20, 1861, voted to leave the Union. Representing Currituck was Henry M. Shaw, of Indiantown, who voted to secede. Shaw later resigned from the convention to become colonel of the Eighth Regiment, North Carolina Troops. He was in command at Roanoke Island in February 1862 when the regiment was captured by Union forces under General Ambrose E. Burnside. Shaw was joined by hundreds of other Currituck residents who enlisted to fight for the Confederacy.<sup>80</sup>

A *New York Herald* article, published in September 1861, highlighted the strategic importance of Currituck, stating that the county was crucial to communication with a considerable portion of the States of Virginia and North Carolina, and being the great channel through which the commerce of that section finds its way to market. . . . The soil of the region is of great fertility, yielding abundant crops of corn, wheat, and the various other agricultural products. Cotton is grown to the extent of some 100,000 bales, and a large proportion of our naval stores used to be supplied from this section.<sup>81</sup>

The article also emphasized the attraction of the Sound, stating that “Currituck is about fifty miles long, ten miles wide, and is navigable for vessels drawing ten feet of water. Owing to the natural breakwater which protects a great portion of the coasts of North Carolina and Virginia, the water is as smooth as a lake and easily navigated.”<sup>82</sup> Clearly the key to creating a Union stronghold in the area was to master the waters.

The Confederacy also understood the importance of protecting the Outer Banks. On June 9, 1861, a dispatch from Brigadier General Walter Gwynn, Commander of the Northern Department of the Coast Defense, declared: “The citizens of Currituck should be up and doing in the cruel war that is upon the South. . . . This appeal to the citizens of Currituck County to

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<sup>80</sup> John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963, pp. 15, Barbara Snowden, “Civil War in Currituck,” in *The Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina, 1985*, p. 16.

<sup>81</sup> “Operations of the Naval Expedition,” *New York Herald*, September 8, 1861.

<sup>82</sup> “The Rebel Island and Towns,” *The New York Herald*, February 13, 1862.

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send laborers, slaves, or free Negroes to be put in charge . . . at Roanoke Island. Send them on at once. Delay is dangerous.”<sup>83</sup>

On February 7, 1862, Brigadier General Ambrose E. Burnside landed 7,500 men on the southwestern side of Roanoke Island in an amphibious operation launched from Fort Monroe. The next morning, supported by gunboats, the Federals assaulted the Confederate forts on the narrow waist of the island, driving back and out-maneuvering Brigadier General Henry Wise’s outnumbered command. (Wise himself was absent, recuperating from a bout of pleurisy.) After losing fewer than 100 men, the Confederate commander on the field, Colonel Henry Shaw, surrendered about 2,500 soldiers and 32 guns. Burnside’s victory was crucial; not only had he secured an important outpost on the Atlantic Coast, he had also tightened the blockade against the Confederacy.<sup>84</sup>

Another desired Union target was the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal. Early in the war, Confederate forces used the canal to move transports and steam gunboats. With the defeat at Roanoke Island, Elizabeth City, and Edenton, Union forces now turned to block the canal, but soon found that Confederate forces had already made the canal impassable. For months, the canal stood closed; by May, Burnside, realizing the importance of having the canal operational, ordered it to be cleared of obstructions. For the better part of the next three years, Union troops were positioned in Currituck to guard the canal, billeting at the Currituck Courthouse.<sup>85</sup>

One of the biggest problems that Union forces encountered was the ongoing presence of guerilla bands who hid in the nearby swamps. In a dispatch written in September, 1863, Lieutenant-Colonel William Lewis explained: “We made every effort possible to induce the skulking dastards to leave their hiding place, but without effect.” Guerilla forces led raids,

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<sup>83</sup> Walter Gwynn, “Special Orders No. 66,” June 9, 1861, *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Volume 51, Chapter 63, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, pp. 136-137.

<sup>84</sup> John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963, pp. 66-84.

<sup>85</sup> John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963, pp. 66-84.

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destroying all the bridges in the county, ambushing Union ships in the canal, and in general causing mayhem throughout the region. A great deal of activity took place in and around Indiantown. Lewis also complained that "It is very difficult to gather any reliable information from the white people through that portion of Currituck County. . . I am inclined to believe that the inhabitants support them."<sup>86</sup> Lewis promised to burn down the houses of anyone who gave Union troops false information.

While Lewis and others were contending with Confederate forces, many citizens of Currituck were feeling the pinch of restricted travel and no trade. In July 1863, Brigadier-General Henry M. Naglee wrote a letter to a group of prominent Currituck citizens stating that if the county's citizenry refrained from additional hostilities, Union forces would be willing to allow the shipping of goods to Norfolk or Portsmouth and the chance to buy necessary supplies. The response was not long in coming; in less than a month, Naglee received a letter stating that as much as they would like to re-establish commerce, they could not be held responsible for "what we cannot possibly control." The communication emphasized that not private citizens, but soldiers in the Confederate Army, committed the hostilities.<sup>87</sup>

For many residents of the county, the Union occupation proved bitter and hard. In December 1863, three columns of United States Colored Troops led by General Edward A. Wild raided the county, liberating slaves, destroying Confederate camps, and camping on the courthouse grounds. The area around Indiantown was hit particularly hard as the troops burned down the Indiantown Academy as well as Belville, the plantation once owned by Tory Thomas McKnight. A letter from Indiantown resident Joseph Morgan, dated "Indian Ridge, Currituck County, Jany28/63," to his son, Patrick Henry Morgan, a cadet at the Virginia Military

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<sup>86</sup> William Lewis, "Report of Lt. Col. William Lewis, Fifth Pennsylvania Calvary," September 20, 1863, in *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Volume 29 (Part I), Chapter XLL, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890, pp. 137-138.

<sup>87</sup> Henry M. Naglee, July 28, 1863, in *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Volume 39, Chapter 51, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892, pp. 849-850.

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Institute, described the chaos: "A few weeks ago they came over to Indian Town & burned all the buildings on Dr. Marchant' place [Belville], opposite where he used to live, together with the academy & plundered several citizens, taking horses, carts [\_groes], salt & c. [sic]"<sup>88</sup>

**The Aftermath: Reconstruction to the Early Twentieth Century, 1865-1910**

The end of the war in 1865 left Currituck County, like most other counties in North Carolina, in a wretched state. North Carolina was readmitted to the Union in 1868, after it had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and had drafted a new state constitution. Some of the most significant innovations made by this document were the popular election of all state and county officials; the adoption of the township-county commission form of government; and a provision for a "general and uniform system of public schools." Thirty amendments were added to the state constitution in 1875 and 1876. Secret political societies were made illegal (an effort to stamp out the Ku Klux Klan and similar organizations); white and black schools were to be kept separate; marriages between whites and blacks were forbidden; residence requirements for voting were extended to circumvent the Fifteenth Amendment; and the state legislature was given virtual control over county government. For the first time, the state government was organized on the basis of universal male suffrage. The 1867 Voter Registration List for Currituck County illustrates the state constitution's expanded push for democracy for blacks and whites by eliminating all property qualifications for voting and holding office. African Americans now could sit on juries, and imprisonment for debt was abolished. Another first was state-funded public education for African Americans. <sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Margie Welsted Rainey, "Civil War Letters From Joseph Morgan To His Son Patrick Henry Morgan," in Murray, Jeanne Meekins, ed. *Histories of Currituck County, North Carolina Families*, Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 2005, p. 188-189.

<sup>89</sup> Allen W. Trelease, "Reconstruction, The Halfway Revolution," in *The North Carolina Experience*, pp. 285-294.

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After the Civil War, farm tenancy replaced the old plantation economy with its masters and its slaves. The larger plantations were broken up and divided into smaller farms, each taken care of by a tenant, who took a share of the crop after harvest. But it soon became apparent that slavery by a different name had emerged. Tenants found themselves dependent on their landlord or local storeowner, often one and the same person, who extended credit with exorbitant interest for needed supplies. By the time the crop was harvested, there was little, if any, money left over to cover accumulated debts. It was more likely that the tenant owed the landowner. The system thus perpetuated a vicious cycle of debt from which few tenant farmers would ever break free.<sup>90</sup>

By the 1870s, there began appearing a number of publications geared toward evaluating or extolling the virtues of North Carolina and its resources. For instance, Edward King, reporting for the national periodical *Scribner's Monthly*, wrote a series of articles while traveling through the former Confederate States in 1873 and 1874. His portrait of Currituck and its environs, while initially unenthusiastic, still conveyed the economic promise the area held:

The North Carolina coast, as seen from the ocean, is flat and uninteresting. There is an aspect of wild desolation about the swamps and marshes which one may at first find picturesque, but which finally wearies and annoys the eye. But the coast is cut up into a network of navigable sounds, rivers and creeks, where the best of fish abound, and where trade may some day flow in. The shad and herring fisheries in these inlets are already sources of much profit. The future export of pine and cypress timber, taken from the mighty forests, will yield an immense revenue. The swampy or dry tracts along the coast are all capable of producing a bale of cotton to the acre. They give the most astonishing returns for the culture of the sweet potato, the classic peanut, or "guber," the grape, and many kinds of vegetables. It is believed that along this coast great numbers of vineyards will in time be established, for there are unrivaled advantages for wine-growing.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Edward King, *The Great South; A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland*, Hartford, CT: American Publishing Co., 1875, pp. 466-467.

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Earlier, in 1869, the North Carolina Land Company published *A Guide to Capitalists and Emigrants: Being a Statistical and Descriptive Account of the Several Counties of the State of North Carolina, United States of America; Together with Letters of Prominent Citizens of the State in Relation to the Soil, Climate, Productions, Minerals, &C., and an Account of the Swamp Lands of the State*, which documented every county.

The purpose of the report was to “render all possible assistance to persons who desire to invest their funds in this State, judiciously.”<sup>92</sup> The entry for Currituck County noted that the county had a population of 7,500 and included six doctors and three lawyers. There were twelve churches, two academies, and three post offices. There were 500 farms with 37,000 improved acres and 90,000 unimproved acres. Annual crop yields were corn, 300,000 bushels; wheat, 1,500 bushels; oats and rye, 2,860 bushels; peas, 40,000 bushels; Irish and sweet potatoes, 150,000 bushels; butter, 54,000 pounds; flax, 30,000 pounds; wool, 12,500 pounds; beeswax and honey, 5,000 pounds, and that scuppernong and other grapes grow finely. Livestock included 1,085 horses and mules, 7,250 cattle, 6,000 sheep and 15,500 hogs. Overall, the land was good, with good fishing and large quantities of wild game. The forests were primed to be harvested and included large numbers of oak, pine, juniper and cypress trees.<sup>93</sup>

By 1870, the population in the county had declined steeply from 7,415 persons in 1860 to only 5,131 persons in 1870. In part the attrition was the result of men who died in the war and residents who chose to leave the county in search of better opportunities. Politics also played a role; with the annexation of Roanoke Island to Dare County in 1870, Currituck County lost a number of residents.

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<sup>92</sup> North Carolina Land Company, *A Guide to Capitalists and Emigrants: Being a Statistical and Descriptive Account of the Several Counties of the State of North Carolina, United States of America; Together with Letters of Prominent Citizens of the State in Relation to the Soil, Climate, Productions, Minerals, &C., and an Account of the Swamp Lands of the State*, Raleigh, NC: Nichols & Gorman, Book And Job Printers, 1869, p.i.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid, p.22.

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Over the next two decades, the population slowly increased; by 1890, there were 6,747 persons in Currituck County spread out among 1,330 residences. There were a total of 1,350 families with approximately five persons to a family. Farming continued to be the principal occupation in the county. In 1890, there were 958 farms with the average farm between 50 and 100 acres.<sup>94</sup> In addition, a number of villages had emerged. Based on post office records these included California, Coinjock, Currituck Courthouse, Jarvisburg, and Poplar Branch.<sup>96</sup> The publication of business directories such as *Branson's Business Directories* and *Chataigne's North Carolina State Directory and Gazetteer: 1883-84*, help fill out a picture of the county. For instance, according to *Chataigne's*, the Currituck County government consisted of five commissioners, a clerk of Superior Court, a Coroner, a Register of Deeds, a Sheriff, a Surveyor, Solicitor, Treasurer and County Examiner; fourteen magistrates heard cases in various districts and there were two attorneys practicing in the county. Other occupations included auctioneers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights, carpenters and builders, dentists, fertilizer agents, a number of fish dealers, two mills, two saddlers and harness makers, and thirty merchants who owned general stores throughout the county; one in Tulls Creek also sold insurance. There were one dentist and four doctors. The mainland county also had two boardinghouses, both in Currituck.

The 1890 *Branson's Business Directory* describes the county as "well-adapted for truck farming," particularly for melons; the principal farming products included corn and cotton, along with a large variety of fruits including apples, peaches, pears, and grapes. The county's residents are a "church-going people," spread among seventeen churches, and the village of Moyock was "thriving" in part due to the emergence of the Norfolk and Southern trains coming through the area. The area had six schools, all private academies. There were also

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<sup>94</sup> Federal Census 1890, pp. 168, 225.

<sup>95</sup> Federal Census, 1890, pp. 168, 925.

<sup>96</sup> John S. Hampton, *The North Carolina Guide and Business Office Companion, Containing a List of all the Post Offices in the State, with Distances from Principal Commercial Towns; Also the Population of all Incorporated Towns, Divided between the Two Races, together with the Names and Post Offices of the Leading Lawyers in the State*, Raleigh News Steam Book and Job Office and Bindery, 1877, pp. 4-30.

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two watch and clock makers, a shuck factory, one undertaker, and a growing number of merchants and tradesmen throughout the mainland county.

Of all the settlements, the village of Moyock, located close to the Virginia border, was perhaps the closest thing to a commercial center for mainland Currituck County. Settled in 1753, Moyock never grew much, despite the presence of the Shingle Landing Creek, where lumber stores and other goods were shipped, and the establishment of a post office in 1857. Following the Civil War, the area, like the rest of the county was slow to recover. In 1881, however, with the construction of the Elizabeth City and Norfolk Railroad through the village, Moyock's economy was revitalized. Interest in the area's timber by a Canadian businessman named Terault led to the creation of the Carolina Land and Lumber Company in 1902. To accommodate the many laborers who would be working for the company, a hotel was built. Before closing its doors sometime between 1913 and 1916, the Carolina Land and Lumber Company had harvested most of the area's trees, some of which were used to build a number of new houses in the area.<sup>97</sup>

The county's population continued to fluctuate; by the turn of the century, 8,589 people lived in the county. Ten years later in 1910, the population decreased to just under 7,700 people. Farming still dominated, but unlike the population, the number of farms saw a modest increase, from 912 in 1900, to 932 in 1910. Of that number, 682 farms were white-owned, while 250 belonged to African Americans. The county consisted of 186,880 acres with just over 87,000 acres devoted to farming. The average acreage farmed was approximately 93.7 acres. Cereal crops were still the primary source of income, especially corn and wheat. The cultivating of potatoes as a cash crop also increased, particularly sweet potatoes. Truck produce that included fruits and vegetables was on the rise.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Penne Sandbeck and Sarah W. David, "Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report: Widen SR 1222 (Tulls Creek Road) from Moyock School to Intersection of SR 1214, Currituck County, North Carolina," April 2006, pp. 7-8., Marion Fiske Welch, *Moyock: A Pictorial and Folk History 1900-1920*, Norfolk: Donning Company Publishers, 1982, pp. 60-61.

<sup>98</sup> Federal Census, 1900, 1910, pp. 168, 925.

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The Mennonites of Puddin' Ridge

Sometime between 1907 and 1910, the area also drew the attention of a group of Mennonites, who settled in the area known as Puddin' Ridge, just west of Moyock. The Mennonites trace their roots back to the more radical wing of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation and the Anabaptists. The group took their name from Menno Simons, an early leader of the church; the followers became known "Mennonites." In 1693, the Mennonite Church splintered when a group of Swiss and Alsatian Anabaptists led by Jakob Ammann broke away and formed their own religious group, the Amish. The Amish Mennonite church fellowships are considered a very conservative grouping within the larger Mennonite churches. The Amish Mennonites are known for their simple living, plain dress, and reluctance to adopt modern conveniences.

The community that came to North Carolina and settled near Moyock, according to the Federal Writers Project book, *North Carolina: a Guide to the Old North State* came to the area from Ohio and Pennsylvania. These Amish Mennonites were known as "hook-and-eye" Mennonites, because they wore no buttons with their clothing. The style was left-over from the group's early years in Switzerland where buttons, among other things, were taxed.<sup>99</sup>

The group, which consisted of several large families bought land from the Provident Land Company, a division of the Carolina Land and Lumber Company and commenced farming. However, the settlement grew slowly. The Carolina Land and Lumber Company, anxious to have occupants took great pains to accommodate the newcomers, constructing a frame boarding house for the families to reside, while they built homes of their own. The building, nicknamed the "Amish Hotel", was also used by the community for their church services and as a school. At one point, the group had hopes of building a church, but the plans were never realized.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Federal Writers Project, *North Carolina: a Guide to the Old North State*, p. 292

<sup>100</sup> David Luthy, *The Amish in America: The Settlements that Failed: 1840-1960*, Aylmer, ON: Pathway Publishers, 1986, p.296-298.

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Certainly one of the attractions for the Mennonites was the rich black soil for the cultivating of corn, peanuts, soybeans, and potatoes. But by far the biggest and most profitable cash crop grown was that of peppermint, which, along with spearmint, were two commercial ventures of the Mennonites. The group built a peppermint mill that crushed the mint, extracted the oil from the plants, bottled it for sale and to candy factories and pharmaceutical companies.<sup>101</sup> However, despite the profitable crop yield from the land, the Mennonites also had to contend with the combustible nature of the dried swamp muck which burst into flame as a result of careless hunters who dropped their cigarettes on the land. Unfortunately, once the soil caught fire, there was little anyone could do until the next rain came to douse the flames. The group also had to contend with the large swarms of swamp mosquitoes.<sup>102</sup>

The group maintained a fairly isolated existence in the county, though they did make use of the local rail connections to visit members of the Amish community in Norfolk, Virginia. The members also traveled to Norfolk to sell farm goods and in sadder times to bury their dead at the Amish Cemetery that had been established in the city. But life at Puddin' Ridge settlement was hard; the group lacked spiritual leadership, having only one minister that came to live in Puddin' Ridge, and then only for a short time. Ministers from other communities visited only rarely, and only one group of youth was ever baptized. The settlement also experienced turnover from its residents. According to one person who lived at Puddin Ridge, "some came and others left all the time we were there." With no spiritual center and no long-term residential base, the community began to erode. Eventually, the Puddin' Ridge residents left the area; by 1944, the Mennonite settlement had completely disappeared leaving behind no trace of their existence.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Esther Sullivan Silvester, "The Mennonites of Puddin Ridge," in *The Heritage of Currituck North Carolina* 1985, p. 39.

<sup>102</sup> David Luthy, *The Amish in America: The Settlements that Failed: 1840-1960*, Aylmer, ON: Pathway Publishers, 1986, p.298-300.

<sup>103</sup> David Luthy, *The Amish in America: The Settlements that Failed: 1840-1960*, Aylmer, ON: Pathway Publishers, 1986, p. 300.

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Transportation: From Water to Road and Rails

Water traffic remained vital to the mainland county. In the years following the Civil War, a number of harbors were dredged in the area to allow larger steam ships to navigate the waters of Currituck Sound. Tri-weekly visits by various steamer companies such as the Rogers Company out of Norfolk, Virginia, or the Bennett Line, also from Norfolk, to different landings throughout the county brought merchandise and people back and forth. By 1882, local resident W.G. Banks bought a parcel of land at Newburn's Landing near Powell's Point and operated a small shipping line along with a general store.<sup>104</sup> Many communities throughout the county had public and private landings where products were shipped and received. Coinjock was one of the central transportation centers of the county for water travel. Boats and ships traveling the inland waterways bearing travelers and goods passed through the small village. Schooners and other ships visited Point Harbor, located at the far southern end of the county. Boats from large shipping companies such as the Bennett Lines, the Jones Lines, and North River Lines, all based in Norfolk, picked up waterfowl packed in barrels. Salted herrings and farm produce were also shipped from the harbor. Farm produce was also sent by water. Residents too, rather than relying on the county's poor road system, often traveled by water to Elizabeth City for shopping. Poplar Branch, previously known as Van Slyck's Landing was an important commercial fishing center. During the late nineteenth century, two ships, the *Comet* and later the *Currituck*, both owned by the Bennett Lines transported goods and people as far as Munden's Point, Virginia, from which point they traveled to Norfolk by train. In the northern end of the county, Cowell's Bridge near Sligo received freight boats that delivered everything from farm implements and livestock to building supplies and furniture.<sup>105</sup>

The water traffic also spurred commercial growth in the county as specialized businesses such as fish houses, boat building, and marine supplies appeared. Most every

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<sup>104</sup> Margaret Newburn Fowler, "Water Transportation," in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1977, pp. 236-243.

<sup>105</sup> Grace W. Griggs, "Point Harbor," in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1977, pp. 163-164, Vickie Brickhouse, "Poplar Branch," in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1977, pp. 171-174.

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landing had at least one general store that sold various goods and sundries to local residents. Those Residents of the county who traveled by water often depended on the watercraft known as the Currituck hunting skiff, a small flat-bottomed boat, no more than fourteen feet in length. While the exact history of the design is unknown, local boat builders were building the skiffs sometime during the late-nineteenth century. The boats were mostly built from juniper and cypress wood; some local boat builders were known for their unique designs that allowed the craft to not only navigate the shallow waters of the sound, but were able to withstand the weather. The skiffs could be modified to use with sails, and later with small motors, and were used for everything from hauling fish to carrying duck hunters to transporting families to visit or to shop.<sup>106</sup>

In many cases, water transportation was necessary as the roads in the county were still very primitive. Horse and buggy were still the most common form of road travel, as well as horse-or-oxen-pulled carts. The majority of roads crossed through the marshes and swamps; many of these roads were known as “corduroy roads” a log road made by placing sand-covered logs perpendicular to the direction of the road over a low or swampy area. The roads were a definite improvement over the red clay roads in some areas, but still a challenge as loose logs could roll and shift, posing a great danger to horse and passenger. In order to provide some kind of systematic road maintenance, it became customary for a man from each family to volunteer a day’s work on the county roads. The work entailed everything from digging ditches to filling holes with dirt or clearing brush from the road.<sup>107</sup>

The railroads provided county residents another alternative for traveling. The Norfolk Southern Railway, established in 1883, through the merger of the Elizabeth City and Norfolk Railroad and numerous other lines, had two depots located in Moyock and Snowden. The rail

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<sup>106</sup> Jeffrey S. Hampton, “Hulled to Perfection,” *The Virginian Pilot*, September 1, 1996, p. 6, Geoff Bowlin, “Boating Lifestyle on Display at Outer Banks Wildlife Center,” *Carolina Currents*, July 18, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Carlin Forbes, “The Roads of Currituck,” in Bates, Jo Anna Heath, ed, with the Albemarle Genealogical Society, Inc. and The Currituck County Historical Society, Inc. *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, pp. 23-24.

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line, which transported mail and farm and lumber products, is credited for helping the growth of industrial development in Currituck County. The Norfolk Southern also served as a passenger line; on average six passenger trains—four local and two “through”— passed through the stations everyday, bearing bridal couples, families salespeople, and sportsmen to points north and south. Churches or other groups traveling to Virginia Beach also chartered the trains for special occasions. The rails provided ambulatory services; when necessary the trains were flagged at different points along the route to pick up people bound for hospitals in Norfolk. However by 1948 the Norfolk Southern had become a freight-only railway.<sup>108</sup>

Market Hunting and the Rise of the Hunt Club

If there was one industry that almost single-handedly boosted the Currituck economy, it was the practice of market-hunting, that is, of providing meat, through hunting or trapping, to market. Market-hunting became a major source of income for many residents in the county. By the mid-nineteenth century, it was legal to sell waterfowl anywhere in the country and the demand for waterfowl had risen. As a result, many men in the county became professional hunters. At that time, there was no limit on how many or what kind of ducks, geese or swans could be killed. Given the vast waterfowl population of the county, it was only natural to take advantage of bounty.

With the closing of the New Currituck Inlet in 1828, the Currituck Sound’s waters offered up wild celery beds as well as other kinds of nourishment, making the area a perfect wintering ground for thousands of migratory waterfowl. Not only was there plenty of food and water, the area also had a certain degree of isolation that made it the perfect place for many different kinds of birds. Canadian geese were the most dominant group and would, in time, become the most prized and popular game bird. Other waterfowl that visited included swans,

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<sup>108</sup> Warren L. Bingham, “Norfolk Southern Railroad,” in William S. Powell, ed., *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, pp. 799-800, Welch, *Moyock: A Pictorial and Folk History 1900-1920*, p. 95, Barbara Snowden, “Snowden,” in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, p. 214-216.

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mallards, ruddys, canvasbacks, and other varieties of ducks. With the creation of the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal in 1859 that connected the port of Norfolk with Currituck Sound, it became easier to ship large numbers of waterfowl to market. From Norfolk, the game was shipped to Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York, where much of the game made its way onto the menus in up-scale restaurants and hotels. Waterfowl were not only prized for their meat, but also for their feathers that had become fashionable for women's hats and accessories by the 1850s.<sup>109</sup>

Market hunting provided local residents with sorely needed income. In 1901, T. Gilbert Pearson, an ornithologist originally from Greensboro, North Carolina, came to Currituck on behalf of the National Audubon Society to document the market hunting practices. Based on his documentation, the current market prices for game was as follows:

- Pair of canvasbacks . . . . \$2.75
- Pair of redheads . . . . \$1.60
- Pair of ruddy ducks . . . . \$ .90
- (Four ducks constituted a pair)
- Canada goose . . . . \$ .50<sup>110</sup>

Based on these prices, by 1905, a market gunner could earn up to one hundred dollars a day. On a good day, a market hunter might kill upwards of 500 birds, worth almost \$1,000 at market. One market hunter reported that he and his three companions received \$1,700 for 2300 ruddy ducks they had killed. Different types of birds brought different prices with canvasback ducks commanding the highest price at five dollars per pair. Some market hunters would pack their catch and boat it themselves to the nearest landing, others sold their birds to fowl dealers, who then iced the birds, packing them in barrels and then shipped to northern

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<sup>109</sup> Claudia Roberts, "Currituck Shooting Club," National Register Nomination, February 1980.

<sup>110</sup> Bland Simpson, *The Inner Islands: A Carolinian's Sound Country Chronicle*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, p. 45; Jack Dudley, *Wings: North Carolina Waterfowling Traditions*, Morehead, N.C.: Coastal Heritage, 2001, pp.20-21.

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markets. The majority of game was shipped from landings throughout the county including Poplar Branch, then known as Van Slyck's Landing, and Narrow Shore in the south, and Church's and Knotts Islands. During the period 1903 to 1909, 400 Currituck market hunters earned a combined \$100,000 annually having killed a "mind-numbing" 400,000 birds.

The invention of the automatic shotgun in 1910 by the Remington Arms Company allowed market hunters to increase their take. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the price of waterfowl dramatically increased. Market hunting was perhaps at its peak and the demand for waterfowl not only filled the pockets of the hunters but also spurred other local businesses. Boat builders saw a dramatic jump in orders as did decoy makers who carved decoys by the hundreds.

The fabulous wealth of Currituck's wildlife was not limited to the local residents. After the Civil War, hunting tales told by Union soldiers inspired wealthy northern businessmen to come to Currituck to hunt. Journalist Edward King noted in 1875 that "Currituck Sound . . . in winter is a sportsman's heaven. Myriads of [sic] wild ducks, geese and swans resort there during the cold months, and amateurs from every climate under heaven visit the marshes and slaughter the fowls for months together."<sup>112</sup> Traveling by steamships, rail, and boats came wealthy businessmen, who would then travel by boat, oxcart, or horse to remote areas in the county to hunt. Hunting parties were not limited to the area along the Currituck Banks either. Several islands in the sound, including Monkey, Narrows, Pine and Swan Islands, also offered abundant hunting opportunities. Drawn by the seemingly endless hordes of waterfowl, cheap land and inexpensive labor led many huntsmen to organize their own clubs throughout Currituck County.

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<sup>111</sup> Sea Grant North Carolina, "Coastwatch High Season 2006: Carotank...Currituck: Land of the Wild Goose," located at: <http://www.ncseagrant.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=story&pubid=142&storyid=222>; Jim Wilson, "A Perception of Abundance," *North Carolina Wildlife*, October 2005, p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Edward King, *The Great South; A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland*, Hartford, CT: American Publishing Co., 1875, pp. 466-467.

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The first hunting club organized in the county was the Currituck Shooting Club (CK0009), established in 1857 by a group of northern businessmen. The group purchased 31,000 acres at the cost of one dollar an acre in an area south of the village of Corolla, along the west side of the banks. The club was open only a short while when the Civil War broke out. The club closed and many of the building's contents ransacked by the locals. Remarkably, the clubhouse itself was untouched. Still, it would not be until 1867 when the Currituck Shooting Club would reopen.

Between 1870 and 1930, wealthy sportsmen, the majority from the North, bought land, constructed lodges, and opened private hunting clubs. At one point, almost all of Currituck Banks belonged to private hunt clubs, with some clubs owning thousands of acres from ocean to the sound of marsh and open water, often bought for as little as ten cents an acre.<sup>113</sup> By the end of the 1880s, there was no land left to buy in the county's coastal area, prompting one traveler to comment, "There is not a foot of this ground in the whole territory that is not owned, registered by title-deeds, recorded in the archives, and watched over as if it sheltered a gold mine."<sup>114</sup>

By the turn of the century, there were six additional major hunt clubs in the county: the Currituck Sound Club (now the Currituck Gunning and Fishing Club) on Knotts Island, the Swan Island Club, the Monkey Island Club, the Narrows Island Club, the Lighthouse Club and the Palmer Island Club (later named the Pine Island Club). The latter three were located on the Banks. Sports writer Alexander Hunter visited several of the clubs on a trip in 1905. In his book, *The Huntsmen in the South*, he wrote:

There is no place in the Union that had so many costly clubhouses grouped together as Currituck Sound. Everything that could be done for the comfort and luxury of the sportsmen was accomplished. In the midst of barren marshes, lavish clubs were built. The initiation fee for the various clubs was

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<sup>113</sup> Sea Grant North Carolina, "Coastwatch High Season 2006: Carotank...Currituck: Land of the Wild Goose," Jim Dean and Lawrence Earley, ed., *Wildlife in North Carolina*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1987, p.11.

<sup>114</sup> Dean and Earley, p. 11.

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\$1000 to \$5000 with annual dues ranging from \$250 to \$400 per year in the 1890s.<sup>115</sup>

Hunt clubs and lodges were not just for the wealthy. Visiting hunters took advantage of the hospitality offered by local families, particularly on Bells, Church's, and Knotts Islands. In the case of these sporting lodges as they were called, visitors were offered room and meals; in many instances family members or local huntsmen in the area also provided guide services. Some sporting lodges such as the Hampton Lodge, located at the northern edge of Church's Island could house as many as twenty people at a time; however most other lodges such the Barnes Hunting Lodge on Knotts Island could accommodate only from six to eight hunters at a time. Not only did families profit from these visitors; the local economy benefited too.<sup>116</sup>

Education and Religion

By 1866, the state system of education perilously bordered a total collapse. The problem was so great that for a considerable period the cost of providing educational resources depended on local governments. In most cities and towns, local taxes were levied in support of education, but schools in rural areas did not recover from setbacks during the war years until the end of the century. Little is known about education in Currituck during the Reconstruction period. Two schools are noted in 1867 in the *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*: the Moyock School and the Cowenjock (Coinjock) School. By 1877, four schools are listed in the communities of Currituck, Indian Ridge, Moyock, and Sligo. However, according to a report issued by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in 1869, it was noted that the

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<sup>115</sup> Alexander Hunter, *The Huntsman In The South: Vollume I Virginia And North Carolina*, New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1908, p. 299.

<sup>116</sup> Archie Johnson and Bud Coppedge, *Gun Clubs & Decoys of Back Bay & Currituck Sound, Virginia Beach:CurBac Press, 1991, pp. 9, 134-135.*

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county had twenty-four schools; however the department rated the schools as being in “poor” condition. The county had also allotted approximately 1,050 dollars towards its schools.<sup>117</sup>

One school that is not mentioned, but which opened around the same time, is the Jarvisburg Colored School (CK0055), originally located in Powell’s Point. After the end of the Civil War, many African Americans who had lived in Currituck County made their way back. For many, their new freedom meant new responsibilities including making sure their children had a chance at the educational opportunities that so many of the former slaves did not. In Currituck, a black farmer, William Hunt, deeded one acre of his land in Powell’s Point Township so that a school for African American children could be established. By 1882, Hunt deeded another acre of land, this time in Corinth in the Poplar Branch township for the purpose of building a school for black children there. This site was for the first of the three buildings known as the Jarvisburg Colored School. William Hunt continued to be active in educational activities for African Americans in the county until his death in 1890.<sup>118</sup>

By 1885, the county was divided into twenty-eight districts for whites with twenty-one schools, and fourteen districts for African Americans with eleven schools, an impressive accomplishment for a county with few funds. The schools were standardized one-room buildings, measuring “30 feet by 18 feet with 10-foot ceilings and 8 windows; three on each side and two in the end with a door at the other end, windows to have 15 lights each, size of lights to be 10 by 12 inches.”<sup>119</sup> During this period, 1,457 white students were attending school; 763 black children were also enrolled, between the ages of six and twenty-one years of age. The county had hired thirty teachers, nineteen white and eleven black. Unfortunately, school terms fell far short of the required state law of four months, often lasting from ten to twelve

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<sup>117</sup> North Carolina. Dept. of Public Instruction, Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, for the Year 1869, Raleigh: M. S. Littlefield, 1869, p. 53.

<sup>118</sup> Penne Sandbeck, “Jarvisburg Colored School National Register Nomination,” September 3, 2009, pp. 6-7.

<sup>119</sup> Currituck County Minute Book 1, County Board of Education, p. 37.

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weeks. Matters were not helped by poor attendance; both black and white students were reported as having missed almost fifty percent of the school term.<sup>120</sup>

Worsening economic problems and an indifferent Democrat state government did little to foster education in the county. In 1891, the state did increase the tax rate to support schools, but local problems with poor crops and lack of cash hampered such efforts in Currituck. To make matters worse, the local sheriff embezzled funds intended for the schools, making it necessary for the School Board to hire a lawyer to recover the monies. Even though the county now had twenty-eight schools for whites and twenty-six schools for blacks, private schools still played an important role. Six private academies were operating in the closing decade of the nineteenth century: two in Coinjock, two in Jarvisburg, one in Moyock, and one in Shawboro.<sup>121</sup>

The number of churches in the county dramatically increased after the Civil War, with the Methodist and Baptist denominations still the dominant religious forces in the area. Coinjock Baptist Church, a branch of Rehobeth Baptist Church in Maple organized in 1893 with its first congregation numbering eighteen persons. The current church was constructed sometime between 1893 and 1894, on land donated by a member of the parish, Dr. James Garrenton and his wife, Amanda. Mr. Henry Welstead, an English émigré and carpenter, designed a 40 x 60 foot building, keeping in mind the function and the financial means of the congregation. Lumber for the one-story church came from donated timber and from drift logs found in the Coinjock Canal.<sup>122</sup>

The remaining years of the nineteenth century saw a number of county churches in the process of either updating or building brand new buildings for their growing congregations. In 1887, the congregation at the Poplar Branch Baptist Church built a brand new one-story frame

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<sup>120</sup> Gordon Cowley Jones, "The Introduction of Modern Education Into Currituck County, North Carolina," in Currituck County Historical Society. *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1974, pp. 62-64.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Tate, "Coinjock Baptist Church," in *The Heritage of Currituck County 1985*, pp. 71-73.

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church that evoked the simplicity and symmetry of the Colonial Revival style. Rehoboth Baptist Church in Maple by 1889, had added two wings to its existing building to accommodate its ever-growing congregation.<sup>123</sup>

The number of Methodists in the county was growing as well, though by 1884, there was still only one Methodist preacher in the county. By this time, there were seven churches, so congregations waited anywhere for four to six weeks for the preacher to come and offer services in their respective churches. Despite the shortage of ministers, the Methodists in the county numbered enough to warrant the construction of a number of churches, including the Asbury Methodist Church in Coinjock which was built in 1846 and a second Moyock Methodist Church, located on Puddin' Ridge Road.<sup>124</sup>

Other religious groups were also making their way to the county to establish new churches. In 1879, a minister by the name of Neely came to the county with the intention of establishing a New Testament Church in Powells Point. These early religious meetings eventually led to the establishment of the Powells Point Christian Church. At first meeting for worship outside or in members' homes, the group eventually raised enough money to build a church in 1885, sited just a few yards from the current church building. Like many of the churches in Currituck, the Powells Point Church was built by members of the congregation, many of who donated materials, labor and time.<sup>125</sup>

Also emerging were a growing number of African American churches, particularly African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) and Baptist churches. In the early years of Reconstruction, a former slave turned minister, the Reverend Andrew Cartwright, made his way to Currituck County. Between 1866 and 1867, Cartwright founded five churches in the

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<sup>123</sup> Madaline B. Evans Brown, "Poplar Branch Baptist Church 1886-1985, Pauline Walker, "Rehoboth Baptist Church," in *The Heritage of Currituck County 1985*, pp. 79-81, 92-94.

<sup>124</sup> Dr. James Overton, "Asbury Methodist Church," Reverend Mike Davis, "Moyock Methodist Church," Margaret C. Pritchard, "Baxters' Grove Methodist Episcopal Church, South and Pilmoor Memorial United Methodist Church," in *The Heritage of Currituck County 1985*, p. 71, 77-78, 86-87.

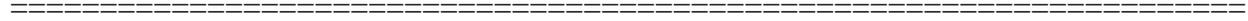
<sup>125</sup> Mrs. Ray (Zelda) Sumrell and Mrs. Jesse (Dorothy) Owens, "Powells Point Christian Church," in *The Heritage of Currituck County 1985*, pp. 91-92.

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northern end of the county, among them, the A.M.E. Zion Weeping Mary Disciples (CK0219) and Pilgrims Journey (CK0227) in the Moyock area and Good Hope A.M.E. (CK0263) in Sligo.

Architecture

Houses

The period from the end of the Civil War to approximately the turn of the twentieth century has been dubbed by one of the county’s historians the “Golden Age of Building.”<sup>126</sup> Good farm prices, the increasing demand for waterfowl, and successful fishing operations meant more residents could either modernize their houses or build new ones. With increasing mechanization, mass production of housing materials from lumber to nails to ornaments, meant cheaper construction. It also signaled the beginning of a standardization of decorative ornament and rooflines. New plans for houses, such as crosswing, along with the reshaping of the exterior façade to more asymmetrical lines, marked a new direction in local architecture. Ells and wings, already a common sight as additions to earlier buildings, were now incorporated into the design of late-nineteenth-century houses. Porches and windows might be enlivened as owners, seizing on pattern books and catalogues, could order architectural elements such as brackets or moldings that would modernize their houses. The growing popularity of the Queen Anne and other Victorian period styles expressed itself in many Currituck homes.<sup>127</sup>

One of the most distinctive of these period styles was the Italianate. Inspired by romantic interpretations of the grand Italian country homes of Tuscany and Umbria, the Italianate style emphasized symmetry of mass and strong vertical lines emphasized by tall, slender windows. The style also boasted exuberant window decoration that included hood

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<sup>126</sup> Roy E. Sawyer, “A Tour of Historic Sites,” in *The Journal of Currituck County Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1973, p. 30.

<sup>127</sup> Catherine Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press with the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, 1990, p. 343.

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moldings; elaborate brackets, scrolls and pendants were also found not only around the windows but the rooflines too. Like the Queen Anne style, the Italianate design was easily assimilated into the rural vernacular of town and farm dwellings.

One example of the vernacular Italianate style in the county, and the second oldest dwelling in Currituck village, is the Walker-Snowden House (CK0082) built in c.1875. The T-shaped, two-story, five-bay, dwelling stands relatively untouched. The side-gable roof features overhanging eaves with heavy wood cornice returns in the gable ends, a boxed cornice, and two interior end brick chimneys with heavy corbelled caps and curved metal hoods. The house is sheathed in weatherboard, has cornerboards, and 2/2 double-hung sash windows with molded surrounds and heavy molded drip hoods. The central entrance features double-leaf entrance doors with a bracketed transom and paneled sidelights. Although the overall exterior appearance is restrained, it is the hipped roof front porch that displays the ornament so closely associated with the Italianate style in its molded cornice, square columns, heavy milled scrolled brackets with decorative scrollwork, bracketed capitals, and sawnwork frieze. The interior plan of the house features door surrounds with stylized pediment tops. Some of the interior doors were grained, a popular decorative painting technique common in the nineteenth century. An unknown Baltimore carpenter carried out the work, and completed the first story interiors, which, in part, explains some of the home's unique ornamentation.

The architecture that is probably most synonymous with and certainly the most popular, of the Victorian period is the Queen Anne style. Despite the design's English roots, Queen Anne architecture, once enthusiastically embraced by Americans, crossed over social and economic boundaries to become one of the most pervasive styles throughout the county. With a pleasing visual array of numerous architectural elements and ornament that appeared almost playful next to the somber lines of the Gothic Revival and the relative simplicity of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles, Queen Anne buildings borrowed freely and exuberantly from across the architectural lexicon. Combining textures, patterns, light and shadow, the style also embraced color and materials that resulted in two- and three-story houses with rambling plans,

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flowing porches, colored glass openings, lacy wrought iron balustrades, gingerbread roof ornaments and windows of all shapes and sizes. The Queen Anne style houses of Currituck County are best described as vernacular as they lack the complexity of form and roofline that identifies high-style examples more commonly found in urban areas.

Several houses in the county are notable for both their incorporation of polygonal bays and their rich application of decoration. At the West-Meiggs House (CK0173) in Barco, instead of the dominant projecting front-gable, two-story, bay window block seen in many of the houses in the South, are one-story, front-gabled bay window blocks on the northwest and southwest corners of the façade and two-story bay window blocks on the south and north gable ends distinguish the West-Meiggs House. What remains of the original elaborate Queen Anne ornamentation is seen in the bargeboards with a stylized vertical element known as a king post with small drop pendant and semi-circular milled and pierced ornament, the small two-light window openings, the pedimented pent, and the original fish-scale shingles since covered with vinyl on the east, north, and south gable ends. Also notable are the two brick chimneys with corbelled caps and brick round arched hoods; the only other examples of this chimney type are seen in the single interior chimney at the Currituck Jail and a house near Moyock. The John Bunyan Owens (CK0119) House, a two-and-a-half-story late nineteenth-century-Victorian home near Powells Point, also retains many of its original elements, including the Queen Anne stained glass windows, the intricately carved and pierced bargeboards, and scalloped shingles decorating each of the home's gable ends, although the brightly painted turned posts with brackets that once supported the hipped-roof wrap-around porch, have been lost. A small gablet with a raking cornice and scalloped shingles in the end marks the entrance.

One of the county's most exuberant examples of the use of applied ornament to express the Queen Anne style is the two-story Martin J. Poyner House (CK0237) built in Moyock in 1902. The hipped roof wrap-around porch features a spindle frieze and unusually detailed milled and pierced brackets. Another unusual bracket styling is seen underneath corner edges of the projecting two-story, front gabled bay. The north, south, and west gable ends of the

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building are also highly ornate, with narrow diagonally cut wood strips arranged in a pattern that simulates a sunburst and paired, single-light hinged windows. The pattern is repeated with the building's 2/2 wood sash windows, which also feature heavy scrolled, console-like brackets.

The updating of houses with Victorian-era motifs was a popular trend. The two-story, five-bay, I-house known as the Walter Scott Newburn Jr. House (CK0144) built in Powells Point, c.1860 and was remodeled in the late nineteenth century with heavy cornice returns, small rectangular louvered vents and pierced bargeboards with spindlework in the gable ends; a smaller central gable located on the façade is distinguished by a covering of sawtooth shingles with a diamond-shaped louvered vent.

The elaboration seen on the exterior of the county's vernacular Queen Anne houses also characterized their interiors. For example, the West Meiggs House features An ornate heavy painted square columned newel post has raised decoration and elaborate moldings, turned balusters, and risers on the quarter turn hallway staircase; a landing newel post features an acorn drop pendant. Acorn-styled pendants also are found on the turned balustrade of the Walter Scott Newburn, Jr. House. The same stylized acorn element is found on the newel post in the Walter Scott Newburn Sr. House across the road. Both New burn houses also display diagonally patterned beaded board walls and ceilings and elaborate mantelpieces.

The vast majority of Currituck County's Queen Anne-influenced houses are traditional basic house types embellished with heavy boxed and molded cornices and applied ornament. For example, the I-house with triple-A roof built in 1908 for prosperous farmer and merchant Henry Dozier (CK0263), in Tulls Creek, features a boxed and molded cornice with heavy returns and elaborate scrolled wood collarbeams in each gable end. The dining room features an unusual fireplace surround; unlike the majority from this period, which feature fluted engaged pilasters with scrolled brackets, this surround consists of a simple wood mantel and shelf with Doric-styled columns, a type not seen anywhere else in the county.

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Education and Religious

Religious and educational buildings in Currituck County tended to be vernacular expressions of two popular national styles: the Gothic Revival and Colonial Revival. In the case of educational buildings, the Colonial Revival style, one of the most popular and enduring styles in the country was popular in designing institutional buildings such government offices, courthouses and schools. The stylistic ideals expressed by the Colonial Revival style lay in the idealized vision of colonial architecture. Buildings done in this style were by no means exact copies of earlier American colonial structures. Rather, certain design elements of the Georgian and Federal periods were borrowed and reinterpreted giving the Colonial Revival style a distinct stylistic expression. Architectural elements such as pedimented or gabled windows, pilasters and columns, entrance doors with fanlights, Palladian windows, and windows with tracery elements were common elements used in the design. Buildings were pleasingly symmetrical and ordered.

In the county, the Colonial Revival style is seen in the Coinjock School (CK0238), a typical one-room schoolhouse that was built during this period. Now located on Dozier Road in Tulls Creek, the wood frame schoolhouse, which may have been built sometime between 1890 and 1900, once stood in the village of Coinjock. The Colonial Revival influence is seen in its smallest details, from the front-gable roof and original weatherboard siding, to the overhanging eaves, boxed cornice, and single corner boards that embellish this simple building and its façade. The building has a pair of 6/6 double hung-sash with working hinged vertical board shutters on each side. Wood vertical board single-leaf doors mark the gabled entrances.

The influence of the popular Gothic Revival style dominated the county's religious buildings. The style, which was dominant from the late eighteenth century until the early decades of the twentieth, favored an elaborate and decorative styling. Used in both stone and frame construction, a Gothic Revival church might have Gothic arched glass windows and doors, steeply pitched roofs, and a strong vertical orientation. Some of the county's best examples of Gothic Revival are seen in the Coinjock Baptist Church (CK0175) with its arched art glass windows and wood entrance doors. Henry Welstead's skill, not only in carpentry, but also as an engineer, figure prominently in the church's

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interior, particularly in the tray ceiling of beaded board in the sanctuary, which today still provides excellent acoustics. The interior walls, also of beaded board, were finished in hard oil that has never required any refinishing since the finish was first applied over a century ago. Another distinctive feature is the sanctuary's sloping wood floor, perhaps the only floor of its kind found in the county's religious architecture. By 1953, the congregation had grown large enough to warrant additional building space, as seen in the three-story brick addition. Like many churches in the area, Coinjock Baptist covered its original weatherboard siding with brick veneer in 1955. The alteration unifies the different blocks of the building. Perhaps more than most rural churches in the county, the Coinjock Baptist Church represents the slow evolution of a small country church that not only changed in terms of the needs of its congregation, but also tried to keep abreast of changing architectural tastes in rural church architecture.

The Knotts Island United Methodist Church (CK0211) is an excellent example of an early twentieth-century vernacular Victorian Gothic building, with the majority of its historic fabric intact. Built in 1911, the building is situated on the highest point on the island and was built on the same site where an earlier church once stood. The large one-story, frame and beaded weatherboard building rests on a foundation of cast concrete block, a feature not seen anywhere else on the island or in the county. Directly above is a wide molded wood water table that wraps around the church. The intersecting gable roof is covered with slate shingles; and a simple wood king post is found in each gable end. A central interior brick flue with corbelled cap is found on the west end gable. The entrance consists of two double-leaf wood paneled doors; a Gothic-arched stained-glass light tops each doorway. Sitting above the entrance roof is an octagonal-shaped steeple. The frame and weatherboard closed lantern has blind louvered, Gothic arched openings; the tower above is covered with slate shingles topped by a slate shingle-covered octagonal spire decorated by a copper cross finial.

The interior is no less impressive and is similar in style to that of the Coinjock Baptist Church. The interior walls and the tray ceiling are of dark tongue and groove beaded board laid in diagonal panels. One of the church's most elegant features is the dado panels that are hand-combed and fingered on the church walls. A turned wood balustrade with molded wood railing

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cap and simple newel posts separate the congregation from the slightly elevated, segmental-arched sanctuary.

The Knotts Island United Methodist Church is unique among churches in the county in its interpretation of the Victorian or Late Gothic Revival style. Unlike other churches in the area, which borrow from the Gothic style as seen most typically in Gothic-arched windows and entrances, the Knotts Island Church illustrates some of the style's basic characteristics with its large massing, its emphasis on verticality with the church's ornate steeple, the broad gables of the roofline, the heavy moldings used on the exterior, and even the simple king's posts. Some of the church's design may in part have been influenced by one of the county's greatest benefactors, J. P. Knapp, who lived on Mackey's Island.

The churches established by the Reverend Andrew Cartwright, which bear striking similarities in design, materials, and style, illustrate a much larger stylistic pattern of vernacular Gothic Revival interpretation among African American churches in the county. Pilgrims Journey, built in 1907, is a one-story, front-gable roof block, originally covered with weatherboard and with double cornerboards. The current vinyl siding may obscure a central window opening such as those seen on Good Hope A.M.E. and Weeping Mary. Nevertheless, the roof retains its overhanging eaves with beaded board soffit and shaped curved rafter tails along the north and south slopes. Attached to the northeast wall of the façade is a two-story tower with a pyramidal roof; a pointed arch Gothic window is located in the top east wall. The church retains the original two entrance openings; in between each is a large pointed arch Gothic art glass window.

Center Chapel A.M.E. Church (CK0190), located directly south of the Coinjock Colored School on Caratoke Highway, is a small one-story frame church once covered with weatherboard. This current building was built sometime during the first two decades of the twentieth century. At first glance, Center Chapel is remarkably similar to the style and form of Weeping Mary Disciples Church (CK0219) in Tulls Creek; it seems likely that these two late-nineteenth-century churches were constructed about the same time. Both feature front-gable

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roofs with overhanging eaves and heavy cornice returns; even the location of its interior brick flue on the lower roof slope is identical. Instead of Weeping Mary's Gothic arched window in the front-gable end, Center Chapel features a lunette window. Double-leaf wood four-paneled doors flanked by Gothic-arched art glass windows set in rectangular molded wood surrounds mark the central entrance. Another interesting feature of the church is its windows; in addition to the windows mentioned above, the church has pointed arch 1/1 wood sash, art glass windows with wood pointed arch molded surrounds. Attached to the northeast corner of the façade is a two-story tower with a pyramidal roof; a shed pent articulates each story. Like Weeping Mary Disciples, Center Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church conveys the signature elements of the Gothic Revival style, particularly through its windows, as well as the quiet dignity and simplicity of the small African American rural church.

Commercial Buildings

Some of the county's most intact examples of commercial buildings date from the late nineteenth century. One of a small complex of buildings owned by the Walker Family is the former E.R. Johnson-Snowden General Store (CK0084). Constructed c. 1897, the building retains much of its original character both inside and out, and provides a glimpse into what was once a fixture in small communities across the South: the general store. This one-story building features the original false-front parapeted storefront and two recessed entrances, which are marked by double-leaf wood doors flanked by large four-light display windows. A shed-roof front porch supported by battered wood posts on brick pedestals was an early twentieth-century addition. At one time, gas pumps were located outside the store entrance. The interior remains comparatively unchanged, with many of the original shelves, which feature bracketed cornices with its zigzag sawn ornament. The counters are no less impressive, with paneled and bracketed bases and diagonal beaded board countertops.

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Another surviving, intact commercial building dates from the first decade of the twentieth century. Located roughly northeast of the Edmund Gallop property in Harbinger, is a one-and-a-half-story, frame Gallop Store, built somewhere around 1910, (CK0131) has served as a commercial and agricultural structure. The building is covered with board-and-batten siding and the front-gable roof has exposed rafter tails. In the front gable end is a small loft opening that has been boarded up. Marking the entrance is an oversized shed-roof hood supported by heavy wood braces sheltering by double-leaf vertical-board doors.

Hunt Clubs

The operation of hunt clubs, both private and public, continued to prosper in Currituck County. By the early twentieth century, a number of establishments were operating throughout the county, on the mainland, the Outer Banks and several islands including Knotts, Monkey and Swan Islands. Today, only one private and one public club remain from this period: the Currituck Gunning and Fishing Club situated on Knotts Island.

The Currituck Gunning and Fishing Club (CK0198) is located on the east side of busy Woodleigh Road. Marking the entrance to the property are two stone gate posts bordered by woods and a modern vineyard. Each post is marked by a marble plaque bearing the words "Currituck Gunning and Fishing Club," one of Currituck County's most architecturally significant hunting lodges. The two-story, five bay, cedar shingled building was constructed in 1905 on the same site where an earlier lodge once stood. The hipped roof has three brick chimneys with corbelled caps. The central single-leaf wood paneled door has an unusual graduated wood surround with two sidelights that give the entrance a slightly art deco look. Attached to the north wall of the dwelling is a small one-story breezeway that leads to a c. 1884, one-and-a-half story, gambrel roof, frame and shingle addition that once housed the caretakers. This building was moved to the property from the Outer Banks. The interior of the lodge is no less impressive and features a free-flowing plan with rooms loosely arranged around an open hall on the first floor. To the south of the main hall is the men's den, which has two large brick

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fireplaces, a cross-beam ceiling of dark wood, and beaded board wainscoting along the south wall. One of the more interesting rooms in the house is the gun room, located just to the right of the hall staircase. The room still has the original lockers that came from a stevedore union hall and gun racks.

**A Shifting Landscape 1910-1945**

The first decades of the twentieth century brought some change to mainland Currituck County. The population held steady and agriculture was still the dominant way of life. By the 1920s, however, the appearance of paved roads and highways marked a gradual shift away from the water transportation that had served many residents for years. Slowly, businesses appeared along the highways, including stores, car dealerships, gas stations, and restaurants as well as a number of houses. Almost all the small communities in the mainland county were served by a local post office, though the county still had no incorporated towns. Moyock had become a busy commercial center with three general stores, all of which were within a block or so of the depot. One store was owned by the Poyner family, who also owned a bottling works that dispensed and delivered soda and, by 1935, an oil company.

Until the 1930s, steam-powered ships navigated the waters of Currituck Sound. Powered by a paddlewheel, the boats were economical to build, and maintained a strong presence in the county long after they had passed from use in other parts of the state. These steamships were often built with two decks and could carry everything from people to livestock, from foodstuffs to building supplies. The ships were also used to push barges. The ships provided the main source of transportation for the county until the advent of the highway system.<sup>128</sup>

By the 1920s, with the growing use of the automobile, it was clear that the existing roads in the county would have to be improved. While horses and buggies or wagons could still navigate the rough roadways, automobiles could not. With the state absorbing the county roads

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<sup>128</sup> Meverden, Keith. "Currituck Sound Regional Remote Sensing Survey, Currituck County, North Carolina," unpublished masters thesis, 2005, p. 32.

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into its own growing statewide network of highways, road improvements finally got under way in the county. Construction crews were brought in along with heavy road building equipment to begin a large-scale road-building project. New roadbeds were created, graded, and leveled. Gone were many of the curving and twisting trails and corduroy roads that had made up Currituck's roadways. Road crews also dredged the canals across the marshes, creating causeways that connected communities such as Church's Island and Gibbs Woods to the mainland. In 1928, the first concrete roads were poured from the Virginia line to Grandy. Between 1930 and 1933, the highway from Grandy to Point Harbor was surfaced and a NPS bridge was built across the Currituck Sound between Point Harbor and Kitty Hawk. By 1937, a new highway had been built from Barco northwest to Camden County.<sup>129</sup>

One of the most important developments in the county was the formation of the Currituck Agricultural Extension Service. The seeds of extension work began in the late nineteenth century when federal and state movements saw the need for practical education to help working-class people improve their lives. A series of federal acts helped to establish extension services in the states. In 1862, the federal Morrill Act provided funds from the sale of public lands to establish land-grant colleges for teaching agriculture and mechanical arts. In North Carolina, the funds helped to finance what is now North Carolina State University, strengthened the concept of service to the community by creating a cooperative system through which land-grant college administrators could join with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct demonstration work. It was this act that formally established what was then called the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service.<sup>130</sup>

Efforts to improve agricultural production were at the heart of the Extension Service's early activities. Beginning in 1920, Demonstration Agents visited throughout the county to offer advice and education to local farmers. Initially, their efforts met with resistance. A report from J.E. Chandler, the Emergency Demonstration Agent, indicated that "County organization work

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<sup>129</sup> Carlin Forbes, "The Roads of Currituck," in *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, pp. 23-24.

<sup>130</sup> "A Brief History," Cooperative Extension Service, located at: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/history/>

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has not been wholly accepted. An effort has at least been made towards getting this work started, but due to the backwardness of the people in the county . . . this all important work has not been appreciated as it should have been.”<sup>131</sup> Yet, efforts to reach county farmers eventually proved successful.

By 1925, in addition to the farm demonstration agents, the county also had a number of women home agents, who visited homes in the county to offer assistance to women and children. Most of the home demonstration projects in the first few years directly related to commodities that could be sold to increase family income. Women and girls sold canned goods, eggs, poultry, ham, turnip greens, and fresh vegetables, and by doing so earned a small amount of money. Some of them used that money to buy labor-saving devices for the home. One popular device was the fireless cooker, which allowed farm women to cook poultry while they were doing other necessary work on the farm. A number of home demonstration clubs were established throughout the various communities in the county. In many cases, the women met at a club house where they offered instruction in everything from food-related projects to cleaning, increased storage space, and sewing clothing and hats.

Another popular program conducted was the beautification projects in which bushes, flowers, and trees were planted for homes, businesses, schools, and churches. In addition to these services, home agents helped create Girls Clubs or Canning Clubs in which young farm girls learned how to make money through tending gardens and preserving and selling the produce. Other goals of the home demonstration agents included a campaign for more dairy cows, poultry, and fall gardens, and the establishment of more Girls Clubs in the county public schools.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., J.E. Chandler, “Report,” 1920, n.p.

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The Decline of Market Shooting 1918-1930

Private hunt clubs and market hunters continued to take advantage of the great flocks of waterfowl that came to Currituck Sound. Because there were no laws regulating waterfowl hunting, market hunters and clubs were free to kill as many birds as they could.

This wholesale slaughter of birds, however, did not go unnoticed. In his book *Our Vanishing Wildlife*, William T. Hornaday decried the practice of market hunting:

Of all the meat-shooters, the market-gunners who prey on wild fowl and ground game birds for the big-city markets are the most deadly to wild life. Enough geese, ducks, brant, quail, ruffed grouse, prairie chickens, heath hens and wild pigeons have been butchered by gunners and netters for "the market" to have stocked the whole world. . . . In the United States the great slaughtering-grounds have been Cape Cod; Great South Bay, New York; Currituck Sound, North Carolina . . . .<sup>132</sup>

Hornaday also protested the lack of strong game laws in North Carolina, stating that the "game laws of North Carolina form a droll crazy-quilt of local and state measures, effective and ineffective." But he saved his harshest critique for the market hunters of Currituck County, who

persistently maintain[ed] the bloodiest slaughter-pen for waterfowl that exists anywhere on the Atlantic Coast. There is no bag limit on waterfowl, and unlimited spring shooting. So far as waterfowl are concerned, conditions could hardly be worse, except by the use of punt guns. . . . The market gunners of Currituck Sound are a scourge and a pest to the wild-fowl life of the Atlantic Coast. For their own money profit, they slaughter by wholesale the birds that annually fly through twenty-two states. It is quite useless to

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<sup>132</sup> William T. Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wild Life*, New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1913, p. 64.<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.293.

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suggest anything to North Carolina in modern game laws. As long as a killable bird remains, she will not stop the slaughter. Her standing reply is "It brings a lot of money into Currituck County; and the people want the money." Even the members of the sportsmen's clubs can shoot wild fowl in Currituck County, quite without limit; and I am told that the privilege often is abused.<sup>133</sup>

The number of birds killed in Currituck during this period were far worse than even Hornaday imagined. According to the record book of the Pine Island Club, between 1888 and 1910 members killed 72,124 waterfowl, including geese, swans, snipes, black ducks, mallards, widgeon, gadwall geese, and Canada geese. The record kill for a day's hunt was 892 ruddy ducks by Russell and Van Griggs. This reckless killing decimated the numbers of waterfowl on the Currituck Sound, and market hunting was outlawed in 1918 by an act that made the selling of migratory waterfowl illegal.<sup>134</sup>

The ban on market hunting left many county residents without work. Some men began working in commercial fishing; others pursued farming full-time. But perhaps the biggest employers for the out-of-work hunters were the private hunt clubs. Men became caretakers and guides, women worked as cooks and maids. Boat builders and decoy carvers found steady demand for their crafts. Locals also made a living as independent hunting guides. Some families began providing room and board to hunters during the season in order to make ends meet. Some local market hunters continued to hunt and sell ducks illegally, but on a much smaller scale. [NOTE: Text missing here] a group of sportsmen, traveling on a yacht, were grounded during a storm on Currituck Sound. The group decided to use the boat as their clubhouse until 1913 when construction began of a new club and secondary buildings on Swan Island.

Certainly one of the grandest to be built during this period was the hunting lodge of Joseph P. Knapp. Knapp first came to Currituck during the 'teens as a guest of author Thomas

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p.293.

<sup>134</sup> Sea Grant North Carolina, Coastwatch high season 2006: "Carotank...Currituck: Land of the Wild Goose"

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Dixon. Knapp was so taken with the area and the hunting, that he bought the 7000-acre Mackay's Island from Dixon in 1918. During the period 1919 to 1920, Knapp constructed a three-story, thirty-seven room Colonial Revival "lodge," overlooking Currituck Sound. Knapps' fondness for the Colonial Revival style, particularly that of George Washington's home, Mount Vernon was reflected by the home's lavish exterior with its massive two-story porch.<sup>135</sup>

Stirred by memories of trips to English estates and of his own English ancestry led New York newspaper publisher Ogden Reid to build his hunting sanctuary, the 350-acre compound known as The Flyway (CK0300), on Knotts Island. The original lodge house was built in 1920; unlike the popular shingle covering favored by most hunting clubs or the decided Colonial Revival influences of Joseph P. Knapp's hunting estate, Reid's house was designed more as a Jacobean Revival residence. The style was based on a number of English building traditions, but generally favored steeply pitched gable roofs, elaborate chimneys, decorative half-timbering reminiscent of medieval English timber framing, casement windows and round arched doors. The original house burned in 1959 and was rebuilt the following year; the current house is almost an exact replica of the original.

Dews Island, a small island roughly three miles long, and located near Jarvisburg in the southern end of the county also was home to a private hunting club. In 1923, the island was sold to J.W. Barom and Raymond Peel of Norfolk, Virginia. A frame and shingle, two-story, square clubhouse was built. The club would change hands over the next several years, but always remained a private hunt club.<sup>136</sup>

In 1924, the former Morse Point Gunning Club, located in Back Bay was sold to William E. Corey, the former president of U. S. Steel. Corey renamed the property Buzzards Bay and built a one-story clubhouse and a caretaker's residence. The lodge was an unassuming

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<sup>135</sup> Archie Johnson and Bud Coppedge, *Gun Clubs & Decoys of Back Bay & Currituck Sound*, Virginia Beach:CurBac Press, 1991, pp. 9, 128-129.

<sup>136</sup> Mabel Wright, "Dews Island," in *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, pp.35-36.

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building consisting of a one-and-a-half story, low, rambling building, covered with shingles. The most distinctive feature of Corey's estate was the 75-foot tall steel watchtower that allowed Corey or his employees to scout out poachers on the property.<sup>138</sup>

A number of public sporting lodges that catered to visiting hunters were operated in the county. These lodges were private homes in which the owners and their families provided meals and lodging for hunters during the hunting season. The Grover Cleveland Sawyer Lodge (CK0135), operated from 1928 until 1962 and was one of three popular hunting lodges in the village of Spot. Sawyer's lodge was also the largest and only public hunting lodge in that area. Two other sporting lodges that were popular among local and visiting hunters were the Barnes Hunting Lodge (CK0212) on Knotts Island, and Caroland (CK0283) in Poplar Branch.

The Barnes Lodge is considered to be the oldest public hunting lodge on Knotts Island. The home, owned by John E. Barnes began offering meals, lodging and guide services in the 1920s. Barnes served as a federal game warden for the Back Bay and Currituck Sound area during the 1930s. It turned out that during this period, when many locals, desperate to feed their families, often shot more than the allotted limit of ducks. Barnes, aware of the dire situation that many faced, chose to overlook the infractions. He was later relieved of duty. Along with Caroland, several other individuals in Poplar Branch operated sporting lodges, including Blanton Saunders, a noted decoy maker and guide, who operated a lodge from his dwelling during the 1930s.<sup>140</sup>

The Great Depression and World War II

The collapse of the stock market in October 1929 and the coming of the Great Depression had a tremendous impact on the county. As in the rest of the South, the agricultural economy in

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<sup>138</sup> Archie Johnson and Bud Coppedge, *Gun Clubs & Decoys of Back Bay & Currituck Sound*, Virginia Beach:CurBac Press, 1991, pp. 9, 128-129.

<sup>140</sup> Archie Johnson and Bud Coppedge, *Gun Clubs & Decoys of Back Bay & Currituck Sound*, Virginia Beach:CurBac Press, 1991, pp. 131-138.

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Currituck had already been struggling since the early 1920s. The Depression only deepened the problem. Small business owners were particularly vulnerable; with less money in circulation, there were fewer paying customers; with the absence of credit and financing, businesses foundered. Although large farms generally continued to operate, small farmers suffered, having fewer resources and little money to fall back on. Adding to their misery was a terrible drought that struck in 1930 and 1931.

Throughout the 1920s, the state of agriculture in the county had remained fairly constant; the typical farm consisted of approximately 92 acres; the largest number of farms (763) were classified as general, meaning that they did a little bit of everything as opposed to the 202 farms that grew grain crops or the 304 farms that harvested specialty crops, such as corn or potatoes. The percentage of tenancy remained constant as well; between 1920 and 1930, tenants in the county did twenty-one percent of the farming. Yet, the majority of farms had neither running water nor electricity. Only 27 farm homes had a telephone.

Federal programs to fight the Great Depression, or at least to counter the human suffering, brought almost \$440 million into North Carolina by 1938, with the most important New Deal farm program, the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), paying farmers a modest sums to grow fewer crops and to raise fewer livestock, leading to better prices and higher incomes. State colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture emphasized farm management. Extension agents taught farmers about marketing and helped farm groups organize both buying and selling cooperatives. At the same time, extension home agents continued their mission to teach farm women the importance of good nutrition, canning surplus foods, house gardening, home poultry production, home nursing, furniture refinishing, and sewing, all skills that might provide some extra income or help families survive through the years of economic crisis. The success of the New Deal agricultural programs, however, came at a price. Reduced production meant that fewer tenant farmers and sharecroppers were needed; many left seeking better opportunities elsewhere.

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One of the more popular programs in the county was the "Live-at-Home" program, in which farm families were encouraged to provide most of their own food. Perhaps one of the more important programs to come out of this service in Currituck was the emergence of the roadside markets. Elizabeth Sanderlin, an agent for the Farmers Home Administration office, helped implement a program in which roadside markets were created along the main highway at which farmers could sell extra produce. At the time, only one farm family was interested in participating. In 1939, the Currituck Farm and Home Market opened near Poplar Branch, selling vegetables, poultry products, canned goods, homemade rugs and aprons. The idea gradually caught on, with many other farm families opening up their own markets to sell goods to people traveling on the highway.<sup>141</sup>

Another important program supported by the Home Demonstration Office was Rural Electrification. In 1930, a group of women went to the Virginia Electric and Power Company to request that Currituck be considered for electrification. That year, a line was extended from Suffolk, Virginia to Moyock; by 1936, Electricity was available to county residents for the first time. Lines initially extended as far south as Poplar Branch. By 1939, the majority of the county was being serviced, with the exception of Knotts Island and Churchs Island, neither of which received electricity until 1945. The impact of rural electrification was enormous; by 1938, it was reported that people were buying increasing numbers of electrical appliances. The installation of bathrooms in homes was also increasing, as was the use of running water and electricity in the kitchen.<sup>142</sup>

During World War II, the extension service again worked with farmers and their families, along with 4-H club members, to secure the production increases essential to the war effort. Local women were led by Home Demonstration and extension agents in programs to increase food production and preservation, which included tending livestock, growing tobacco, driving tractors, and doing any other tasks to ensure that farms produced greater amounts of food.

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<sup>141</sup> Jeffrey S. Hampton, "The root of Currituck's roadside markets," *The Virginian-Pilot*, August 19, 2001, n.p.

<sup>142</sup> Nat and Evelyn Sanderson and Elizabeth P. Sanderlin, "Rural Electrification," in the *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985, p. 53-54.

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Women across the state raised Victory Gardens following the February 1942 "Victory Garden Week" sponsored by the Agricultural Extension Service. North Carolina 4-H club members also aided the war effort primarily through the "Food for Victory" program and the "Feed a Fighter" campaign. The Victory Garden Program was one of the most popular and successful programs of the war years; it provided seed, fertilizer, and simple gardening tools for the victory gardeners. An estimated 15 million families planted victory gardens in 1942, and in 1943 some 20 million victory gardens produced more than 40 percent of the vegetables grown for that year's fresh consumption.<sup>143</sup>

Religion and Education

Currituck County's school system might have continued its desultory progress if not for the interest of New York businessman and publisher J.P. Knapp. Knapp was drawn to the area for the hunting; by 1918, he had purchased Mackeys Island near Knotts Island and built a 2,500-acre hunting estate. During this period, one of Knapp's publications, *Collier's Weekly*, was running a series of articles on American education. At some point, Knapp became interested in the area's school system and its problems. He used his own money to build schools and teacherages, start educational programs, hire a traveling nurse and even supplement teachers' salaries. He also recruited a woman from Washington's Federal Bureau of Education to serve as superintendent of the county school system. When county officials could not meet her salary demands, Knapp again used his own resources to make up the difference. Knapp also helped start up a "bookmobile" library in the 1930s. Currituck County residents gathered around a Model A Ford that Knapp had donated, which carried books to be loaned out. Almost single-handedly, J. P. Knapp transformed the county school system into one of the best in the area.

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<sup>143</sup> "A Brief History," Cooperative Extension Service, located at: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/history/>

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Today the most vivid reminders of Knapp's legacy are the Knotts Island Elementary School (CK0204), and the Currituck Teacherage (CK0027) near Currituck village.<sup>144</sup>

Sears, Roebuck and Company president Julius Roswenwald and African American educator Booker T. Washington, in an effort to provide better schools for African American children throughout the rural South, conceived the Rosenwald School Project. From 1915 to approximately 1930, more than 5,300 school buildings were constructed throughout fifteen southern states, including North Carolina. In Currituck County, three schools were built in Coinjock, Gregory and Moyock. Of the three, only the Coinjock and Moyock buildings have survived. The concept for the schools was straightforward; Rosenwald contributed approximately one-fifth of the monies toward the schools while black communities raised the rest through donations from blacks and whites and the local white school board, which agreed to operate the facilities. It was a radical undertaking for the time, a Rosenwald Fund official later wrote, "not merely a series of schoolhouses, but ... a community enterprise in cooperation between citizens and officials, white and colored."<sup>145</sup>

Another of the few remaining symbols of segregated educational facilities in northern Currituck County is the Currituck County Training School (CK0339) located on Caratoke Highway in Sligo. Until its establishment, secondary education for African Americans in the county was virtually non-existent. The school building originally was a church known as the Methodist Snowden Temple Church, a one-and-a-half-story frame building. In 1925, the land and the chapel were sold to members of the Grand United Order of the Odd Fellows, Lodge No. 10557, an African-American fraternal organization in the county, who then built a one-story lodge addition onto the church. In 1931, the property and buildings were sold to the Currituck County Board of Education for the purpose of establishing a high school for blacks. The existing buildings were then converted into classrooms. In 1943, the school suffered considerable damage from a hurricane. The school board ordered the razing of the original buildings and authorized

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<sup>144</sup> Jones, "The Introduction of Modern Education into Currituck County," pp. 71-93.

<sup>145</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review LXV: 4 (October 1988).

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the building of a new school. With the opening of a new white elementary school in Poplar Branch, however, the board decreed that the former white Jarvisburg Elementary School be moved to the County Training School site. However, that move never materialized. The training school stayed in operation until 1950 when the county opened Currituck Union School for African-American students in Barco, at which point the County Training School was then closed.

Religious activities continued in the county with little variation, the Methodists and Baptists remaining the dominant religious communities in the county. Many congregations built new churches or added on to existing buildings. Even as the Baptists and Methodists continued to expand throughout the county, there also continued a small influx of new churches and denominations. Many churches such as the Jarvisburg Church of Christ, Sharon United Methodist Church in Poplar Branch, and Powells Point Christian Church found themselves making unplanned for repairs and rebuilding due to storm and hurricane damage.

One local minister's church in Aydlett became a haven for visiting evangelists during the 1920s. On a piece of property, located near Currituck Sound, a large frame building, the Currituck Gospel Tabernacle was built. Eley T. Adams, a resident of the county served as the church's minister. The church played host to a number of evangelical preachers who passed through the area. Services were held at all times of the day and night, with people coming by boat, buggy and automobile to hear guest preachers and professional gospel singers at the Tabernacle. The church's fortunes were shortlived; the building was destroyed by a snowstorm in 1929 and never rebuilt. Some churches, unable to attract new members began closing their doors, such as Asbury Methodist Church in Coinjock, which closed its doors in 1928 because of a dwindling congregation.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Milford Baum, Sudie B. Jones and Rudie B. White, "Currituck Gospel Tabernacle," Dr. James Overton, "Asbury Methodist Church Coinjock," in *Heritage of Currituck County, North Carolina*, Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1985 pp. 71, 81.

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Architecture

Houses

During the 1920s and 1930s, architectural taste in the county remained deeply rooted in the nineteenth-century tradition. Wealthy homeowners still tended to live in older houses, periodically updating them, but overall the county's tastes were conservative. It appears that there was not a great deal of new construction; quite often houses stayed in families. What new dwellings were constructed tended to be a variation on the bungalow: a one-to-one-and-a-half-story dwelling with a full-length porch often supported by battered posts or columnettes resting on brick piers. Simple Brackets or knee braces along the roof and porch were also popular. However, over time the term came to denote any small house that might have a remote connection to the basic elements of a bungalow.

Between the two world wars, the bungalow was one of the most pervasive forms of new middle-class housing in the rural South. In Currituck County, the bungalow tended to be quite plain, with almost no exterior decoration. The Spruill House (CK0328) in Grandy, a one-and-a-half-story, front-gable roof, weatherboard dwelling is a good example of the typical bungalow that once dotted Caratoke Highway. The building also is a reminder of how quickly once-common building types and styles can quickly pass from the landscape as time, roads and tastes change.

There were those bungalows too, that aspired to be like in spirit, if not in actual design to the Craftsman style of bungalow. The Craftsman Style emerged as one of the most popular architectural styles during the first decades of the twentieth century. The style originated in California, and thanks to pattern books, catalogues and popular magazines quickly spread throughout the country. The typical Craftsman bungalow was a one-to-one-and-a-half-story house with front gable roofs that usually extended over a porch that spanned the facade. Roof ornament could include rafters, ridge beams and purlins. Chimneys were often engaged and built of brick, though rubblestone was also popular. Porch supports consisted of tapered or battered posts on brick piers. Window openings as well as doors could consist of narrow vertical lights;

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often windows might have three or four lights in the upper sash and a single light in the lower sash.

The Houska House (CK0123) in Harbinger, and the house at 1530 Tulls Creek (CK0261) illustrate more closely what came to symbolize the “ideal” of the bungalow. Both homes are situated in lots with plenty of trees, plantings and lawn. Both are one-and-half-story with engaged porches that offer generous shelter. Using brick and wood, the homes embrace simple decoration as seen in the simple brackets along the rooflines. In short, the dwellings and their surrounding depict a successful partnership of the built and natural worlds.

The bungalow was a popular mode for kit houses. One of three documented Sears, Roebuck & Co. kit houses in Currituck County was built c. 1925 on Knotts Island at the edge of the Mackay Island Wildlife Refuge. This kit house, now owned by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, is the “Madelia” model featured in the Sears Kit House catalogues from 1918 to 1922. Certainly one of this building’s unique features is its jerkinhead roof with heavy cornice returns and jerkinhead dormers on the east and west roof slopes, a roof type not seen anywhere else in the county. Sears kit houses could be customized, and it appears that the original owner kept the wood balustrade design but not the brick wing walls seen in the original design and the Sears advertisement. Given the relatively close proximity of the Munden General Store in Pungo, Virginia, it is possible that the dwelling may have been purchased there, as the store stocked kit house catalogues for companies such as Sears and Aladdin and a number of kit houses are found in the vicinity between Pungo and Knotts Island. The house would have been shipped by rail; with the pieces brought to the site by truck.<sup>147</sup>

One of the more appealing bungalow variations found in Currituck County is the John Gallop House (CK0125) in Harbinger. Overall, the façade maintains a simple symmetry. Giving

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<sup>147</sup> Meg Greene Malvasi, “The Kit House in Southeastern Virginia: Architectural Documentation of Kit Houses Manufactured by Sears, Roebuck and Company Located within the Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach, Virginia,” William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research, July, 2006.

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a classical touch to the house is the Palladian window in the front gable that consists of a round arched 3/1 light flanked by rectangular 3-light windows. Directly in front of the window is a small horizontal piece of wood that appears to have been part of an ornamental bracing incorporating a now missing decorative bargeboard. This particular window and bargeboard design is seen on a number of other bungalows throughout the county and may represent the purchase of ready-made millwork elements and plans from a firm such as Kramer Brothers in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The Aubrey Snowden House (CK0167) near Currituck village, is one of several bungalows in the county built during the 1920s and 1930s with the distinctive Palladian-inspired window in the front-gable. In this case, the middle round-arch opening has diagonal muntins in the upper sash.

A curious mix of Victorian formality and the typical open plan of a bungalow distinguishes the Stafford-Pruden House (CK0247) from other bungalows in the county. In many ways, the one-and-a-half-story, frame and weatherboard, three-bay dwelling holds true to the bungalow mode as seen in the single and paired 3/1 Craftsman-styled sash windows, the single-leaf wood, three-light Craftsman-styled paneled door, and the one-story hipped roof porch supported by wood battered columns resting on brick piers. The current owner's father, Mr. Stafford, and his brother-in-law designed the house, built between 1935 and 1936. Mr. Stafford had only one request for the house plan: that a formal central hall, reminiscent of the hall in the older Victorian house in which he grew up, be included. As a result, the entrance door opens into a small rectangular formal hall with two doorways: one leading to the living room, the other, to a larger hall that leads to the first floor rooms and staircase to the half-story. This area is more reminiscent of the open plans seen in many bungalow houses.

In spite of the overwhelming popularity of the bungalow, a number of county residents stuck with more traditional designs. Certainly one of the latest I-houses to be built in the area, as well as a notable variation on the form, is the c. 1928 Seth Aydlett House (CK0240) found just north of the hump-backed bridge in Moyock village. Unlike other five-bay I-houses with triple-A roofs seen in the northern part of the county such as those at Shawboro and Tulls Creek, the

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Aydlett House breaks with the typical Georgian-influenced symmetry of the façade by simply placing the intersecting front gable and entrance door off-center at the southeast end of the facade. Typical roof elements of a molded cornice, simple bargeboard, and heavy cornice returns with a central window opening are enlivened by an unusual shingle arrangement of alternating rows of sawtooth and square shingles, a pattern not seen anywhere else in the county. A hipped roof porch supported by turned wood posts connected to a turned wood balustrade spans the façade.

Schools and Churches

The schools and churches built during this period tended to reflect the continuing dominance of the Colonial Revival style. In the case of the county's schools, the style also happened to be favored by one of Currituck's most generous benefactors. The Knotts Island Elementary School was built by J.P. Knapp as part of a larger effort to provide better schools, teachers, and education for the Currituck community. With the Knotts Island School, Knapp spared little expense providing not only a school that was structurally sound, but one of great beauty as well. The school is one of the few high-style examples of Colonial Revival architecture seen in Currituck County. This popular architectural style was used to construct many institutional buildings such as schools and courthouses in the early twentieth century.

Built in 1925 with money that Knapp donated, the H-shaped schoolhouse was constructed of brick. Underneath each window is a small slightly projecting course of brick that appears to be a drip mold. The hipped roof is covered with slate shingles; a bell tower with a conical copper roof, finial, and octagonal base houses the original school bell. The central entrance to the original schools is marked by a projecting front-gable pedimented pent roof portico with full entablature originally supported by paired wood columns. The interior of the original school retains a good deal of its building fabric, including the oversized and shaped wood rafters and king posts that are said to resemble those used in J.P. Knapp's hunting lodge on Mackay's Island.

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Knapp's love of the architecture of Mount Vernon played a role in the design of the county's teacherages located at Currituck, Moyock and Poplar Branch. Built ca. 1923, the two-and-half-story frame Colonial Revival buildings boasted a two-story porch with giant square columns, similar to the front porch found at Mount Vernon. The front entrance doors were marked by a Colonial Revival-styled surround with molded and fluted pilasters and topped by a broken pediment. Luckily, the Currituck teacherage is still standing, a visible reminder of Knapps' generosity as well as his love of the American colonial past.

From 1911 until 1950, The Jarvisburg Colored School served Jarvisburg's African American students. The building illustrates an early twentieth-century, mostly intact and an extremely rare example of a pre-Rosenwald African American school constructed in North Carolina. Furthermore, it is one of Currituck County's few pre-consolidation educational buildings to survive the twentieth century. The property remains on its original site and is a two-and-a-half-story, frame and weatherboard building features a triple-A roof with overhanging eaves, boxed cornice and a frame and weatherboard belfry with a pyramidal roof. A one-story, slightly projecting shed roof block is located in the center of the façade; a small gablet and cutaway porch marks two entrances on either side of the block. Window openings are 2/2 wood sash.

There are two surviving Rosenwald schools in the county, located in Moyock and in Coinjock. The Rosenwald schools had a specific look about them, thanks in part to the efforts of two African American architecture professors at the Tuskegee Institute, Robert R. Taylor, a Wilmington, North Carolina native, and W. A. Hazel who designed a pattern book for the school buildings. For instance, large banks of windows as seen in the west rear elevation of the Coinjock School made the most of natural light during a period when electricity was at a premium in many Southern rural communities. The arrangement of the windows on this elevation also guaranteed that the students would have the advantage of lighting on their left side, which was considered optimal for reading.

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The school designs were simple and straightforward as illustrated by the “Two Teacher Plan” specifically created for a school facing east and west. In the case of the Coinjock school (CK0165), the plan included two large classrooms; the slightly projecting gable-front with its curve-shaped rafter ends, housed the Industrial Room. The two inset entrance porches—each classroom had its own entrance—were located on the north and south walls of the projection.

The Moyock Rosenwald School (CK0335) built in 1922 is an example of the four-teacher school plan with some variation. The one-story, side-gable roof building is sheathed in weatherboard and marked by a pair of single-leaf wood doors in the central bay, flanked by four 6/6 sash windows.

One of the most distinguished religious buildings of this period is the second Moyock Methodist Church (CK0245), built in 1937. The church stands as a good, and only, example of a twentieth-century interpretation of the temple-front Greek Revival style found in the county. The one-story brick building is laid in stretcher bond with a side-gable roof. Dominating the front façade is a large, one-story, projecting front-gable portico; its pedimented pent roof is trabeated, with full entablature including dentils and a Doric frieze. Supporting the roof are oversized Tuscan columns. Surmounting the entrance is a molded frieze similar to those seen at the Cox and Walcott Houses, also located in the Moyock area. Distinguishing this frieze is the inclusion of small raised wood crosses as part of the surround.

Commercial

Small community and crossroads stores continued their role of not only providing goods in Currituck County, but also serving as post offices and social centers. With the growing numbers of automobiles along the county roads, more stores updated their businesses by adding gas pumps. During the Depression, some new commercial establishments were built in the "house and canopy" design for gas stations that consisted of a small house-like building with an attached canopy that protected the gas pumps and the customer from the weather.

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Built in 1930, the C.A. Wright Store (CK0315) was a mainstay along Caratoke Highway in the Jarvisburg vicinity. It is part of a small complex of buildings including the c.1880 main house (CK0314) owned by the Wright family. The one-story, four bay, frame and weatherboard commercial building exemplifies the rural mid-twentieth-century “house and canopy” general store and gas station. The front-gable roof has a raking and boxed cornice and a beaded board soffit. Walls are defined by molded wood double cornerboards, and the windows are paired 2/2 sash windows in simple wood surrounds. A modified hipped roof porch with rafter tails, supported by square wood posts, marks the roofline.

Another “house and canopy” commercial building constructed about the same time is the Etheridge-Dzwonek Store and Gas Station (CK0134), located near busy Caratoke Highway in Spot. Here, the front slope of an all-encompassing hipped roof with exposed rafter tails serves as the canopy supported by square brick posts resting on square brick piers with concrete caps. The central entrance door is flanked by 9-light commercial windows. Attached to the rear of the commercial block is a one-story, frame and weatherboard, hipped-roof Bungalow-style residence with an interior corbelled brick chimney, Craftsman-styled 3/1 wood sash openings, and a hipped-roof porch supported by square wood columns resting on brick piers.

Hunt Clubs

Even with the ban on market hunting in Currituck County, the area continued to draw sportsmen from all over the country, and consequently a number of hunting lodges were built between 1910 and 1940. The second oldest hunt club, the Swan Island Club’s (CK0332) current complex of buildings was constructed during the years 1913-1914 and remains among Currituck County’s most intact grouping of hunt club structures, consisting of five frame and shingle-covered buildings. The main clubhouse, a two-story, five bay, square-shaped building has a hipped roof, and four brick chimneys; the roof is topped by a large glass-enclosed cupola with a hipped roof. The complex also includes a two-story, side-gable roof “long house” that may have

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served as the decoy and equipment building, a two-story, three bay, side-gable roof dwelling for the guides, a duck house, and a small one-bay boat house.

The Grover Cleveland Sawyer Lodge (CK0135), constructed in 1928, was a simple but sturdy two-story building resting on brick piers. The lodge was constructed of wood frame, covered with weatherboard, and later, wood shingles. The roof has shaped rafter tails with two interior brick corbeled chimney flues. The west wall of the house has two single-leaf wood four-paneled entrance doors located at the northwest and southwest corners; simple wood steps led to each entrance. The interior of the house featured bedroom walls covered by horizontal and vertical beaded board; the floors are tongue and groove pine with each paneled door entrances identified by a number. Each room also had its own flue openings where stoves were used to provide heat.

The Dews Island Hunt Club (CK0028), located on Dews Island built in 1923, for J.W. Barom and Raymond Peel, was little more than a grouping of small rooms. In 1929, the property was sold to a New York stockbroker, George Eyer, who renovated the building, enlarging and adding rooms and installing heating and plumbing. Enclosed by a cypress picket fence, the modest-looking two-story frame building remains relatively unchanged; it still retains its cedar shingle siding and central entrance marked by a one-story, one bay, slightly projecting front-gable enclosed porch. The hipped roof has a boxed cornice with a blind front-gable dormer on the west slope. The interior consists of eighteen rooms including a large formal reception hall, dining room, living room and kitchen on the first floor and bedrooms and baths on the second.

Ogden Reid's property, The Flyway (CK0300) on Mackay's Island is a large, two-story, frame building marked by a complex roofline of steeply pitched gable and intersecting gambrel roofs. Two large Jacobean styled brick chimneys pierce the rooflines. There are paired and tripled casement windows with small diamond lights. One of the home's most attractive rooms is the first floor living area with its high ceilings with large exposed wood beams, oversized stone fireplace and wood floors.

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By far, one of the most striking and distinctive buildings in Currituck County is Reid's "Farm Building" for his hunting estate. Built during the period 1928 to 1930, the building is unique both as hunt club architecture in Currituck, as well as a high-style example of a domestic outbuilding. The building's construction is also English-influenced and was possibly designed by New York architect Lafayette Goldstone. The two-story, U-shaped frame and brick building housed everything from the servants to carriages, cars and farm animals to the estate's heating system. Servants employed by the Reid family lived on the second floor of the west and north wings of the building. Interior details of the living quarters include plaster walls and heart pine flooring. On either side of a long hall covered by pine flooring, were sixteen rooms of varying sizes that housed anywhere from 3 to 4 people, or a small family to one or two persons. While not spacious, each room featured a four-paneled, single-leaf wood entrance door, plaster walls, a molded baseboard, at least one small closet area to hang clothing and at least one window. Two bathrooms, a kitchen and a small dining room completed the living quarters.

**Currituck County, 1945-2006**

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries brought change to Currituck County. Agriculture continued to dominate the county's economy; in response the Currituck Agricultural Extension Service stepped up its services to help farmers with a variety of issues including control of disease and insects on crops, raising livestock, marketing of crops and education on the county's soils to raise a higher quality of produce and grains. Home demonstration agents continued to be active in the county home demonstration clubs where women met to discuss home economics as well as engage in a variety of activities from cookie-baking contests to providing aid after the devastation of Hurricane Donna in September 1960.<sup>148</sup>

Although there was some continued commercial growth, the mainland of the county did not experience the growing numbers of tourists who now passed through on their way to the

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<sup>148</sup> Georgia Kight, "Currituck Agricultural Extension Service," in *The Heritage of Currituck County 1985*, pp. 48-52.

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attractions of the beaches along the Outer Banks. But even though mainland Currituck never became as popular a tourist destination as the Outer Banks, tourism in the form of fishing and hunting provided a tremendous boost to the local economy throughout the 1960s, even though the numbers of water fowl had diminished greatly since the Great Depression.

In the meantime, the county had to cope with a number of challenges. Among the most serious threats to the county was, and continues to be, increased residential development as new subdivisions crowd out many of the historic buildings and farms, and as new residents strain the transportation system and other services. As the county becomes an increasingly popular tourist spot, there are threats to its natural resources as beach erosion, changes in water quality, and new development overtake the coast. Commercial development also threatens the quality of life in the county.

According to recent reports by the U.S. Census Bureau, Currituck County is the 72nd fastest growing county in America. The ranking was achieved by a 31.7 percent increase in population over the last seven years. From an economic perspective Currituck has a high median income of \$49,863, low unemployment, and low property tax rate. This accounts for the migration of many new residents. The unique landscape, the Outer Banks, the climate, and tourist attractions also attribute to the influx of people. Currituck, however, does not produce many jobs, and many of the existing jobs are seasonal. Approximately 76 percent of the citizens commute to jobs outside the county. Conventional places of employment only account for 5,460 workers, most with few or no skills. The growth of tourism leads North Carolina at a rate of 9.9 percent, while employers report a shortage of labor and recruit international workers to fill the gap. In the absence of economic growth proportionate to population growth, the county is experiencing increased demand for public services, education, water, parks, transportation, and public safety. Thus, rapid growth has brought about many changes in social, economic, and political structures. The effects of development have also impacted the available natural resources and rural nature of the county. Many public policy issues and individual

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needs have surfaced that require the attention of political leaders, public officials, and government agencies and departments.<sup>149</sup>

Still, the county retains its vitality. The agricultural community continues to be an important part of the economy. Thousands of acres are cultivated in Currituck County each year, yielding millions of dollars in revenue. A number of farms also offer a wide variety of truck produce. The county has created industrial parks that have attracted new businesses. The Currituck County Airport is a publicly owned, general use airport that is located on the north side of U.S. Highway 158. The newly constructed terminal and expanded runway are bringing increased commercial and private air traffic to the county.

The architecture of the area reflects the post-World War II economic and social growth of Currituck County. By the 1950s and 1960s, new architecture in the area was defined mostly by the emergence of the Ranch-style house. These houses were usually frame with either a brick veneer or some kind of wood sheathing. The ranch house is noted for its long, low-to-the-ground profile, and minimal use of exterior and interior decoration. Today, many of these houses have been re-sided with aluminum or vinyl. Some variations on the Colonial Revival style are in evidence; the most popular is the one-and-a-half-story Cape-Cod style. For the last three decades subdivision development has grown in the county, bringing with it the split-level and other modern house designs. Builders began to borrow freely from a variety of historic traditions, offering neo-eclectic houses that were "customized" using a mixture of features selected from construction catalogs.

Another phenomenon that is now an inescapable part of the county's built landscape is the appearance of mobile home parks. Currently there are fifteen mobile home parks in the county; because of rising home prices, these homes are often the only option available for many families. "A cabin on wheels," as the historian David Hackett Fischer characterized them, mobile homes provide the same kind of "small, cheap, simple, and

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<sup>149</sup> 2008 Currituck County Plan of Work, April 11, 2008, accessed at:  
<http://currituck.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=about>

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temporary” dwelling that for three hundred years has been popular on the frontier.<sup>150</sup> A variation on the mobile home is the widely popular double-wide trailer home, which allows residents more room and blends more easily within residential areas. Modular houses are yet another affordable option for people in the county.

Each new development, however, comes at a price. One of the most distressing aspects is the gradual loss of the maritime landscape, as new subdivisions cover shoreline acreage. Paved roads and the automobile have become the primary form of transportation; the old waterways are being forgotten. Along with new development has come a decline in many of the industries that once defined Currituck, such as boatbuilding. The county’s architectural past is also disappearing, as many of valuable historic resources are lost to development and neglect. A local historic building survey in the 1960s recorded approximately 125 dwellings dating from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fewer than fifty survive today.

Fortunately, many residents and members of the Currituck County government recognize the need to document and, when possible, preserve the county’s built heritage. The survey and inventory of Currituck County’s historic resources was designed to encourage Currituck County residents to preserve historic and representative examples of their historic architectural resources.

Upon visiting northeastern Carolina in 1654, an Englishman Francis Yeardley, wrote, “We find a most fertile, gallant, rich soil, flourishing in all the abundance of nature . . . [and] a serene air.” Currituck County today still retains much of that abundance and serenity. It is present in the waters of Currituck Sound, the fertile croplands of the western county and the presence of the various plant and animal life that continue to make their habitats in the area. Currituck’s historic buildings, while never numerous, also speak of a time and place where dwellings and communities were carved from majestic trees, and the ducks and swans were more numerous than people.

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<sup>150</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 662.

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Section F

**Associated Property Types**

Property Type 1: Farm Complexes

Property Type 2: Dwellings

A. Houses built before 1861

Log

Frame

B. Houses built after 1861

Log

Frame

Brick

Property Type 3: Institutional Buildings

Churches

Schools

Government Buildings

Property Type 4: Commercial Buildings

Property Type 5: Recreational Buildings

Hunting Lodges

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**Introduction**

**Property Type 1  
Farm Complexes**

**Description**

The majority of buildings recorded in Currituck County were originally part of a farm complex. Given the rural and agricultural nature of Currituck County, however, very few intact farm complexes survive. In fact, the most depleted historic architectural resource in the county, in addition to early single-family dwellings, is agricultural buildings. There are no farm complexes in Currituck County that are eligible for the state's National Register Study List. Still, the importance of agriculture in the county and its relation to architectural development are noteworthy subjects of discussion.

Sadly, the days of the small farmstead in Currituck County are coming to an end as growing numbers of farms are sold for development, or smaller acres are being tended. The survival of old farmhouses along county highways, while outbuildings are destroyed, rehabilitated, or moved, is often the only clue that a farm once existed at a particular location. Census and agricultural records also support this change in the landscape. According to the 1860 U.S. Government census, the approximately 520 farms in Currituck County consisted of more than 104,000 acres worth approximately \$1,175,485.00. Of these, the majority (approximately 196) were between twenty and fifty acres in size.<sup>1</sup> Large plantations were almost non-existent in Currituck; in 1860 only two properties in the area consisted of 500 or more acres.<sup>2</sup> More than 140 years later, in 2002, the average farm had grown in size to 424 acres. The number of farms in the county, however, totaled only 82, with their value amounting to \$1,324,800.00.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1860 Federal Census, Agriculture Schedule for Currituck County, p. 104., 210.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> North Carolina Division of Agriculture, Agricultural Statistics Division, "Agricultural Statistics-Currituck County," located at: <http://www.agr.state.nc.us/stats/codata/currituck.htm> Accessed January 5, 2008.

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A farm complex contains three distinct components: the main dwelling, the outbuildings, and the landscape. Outbuildings are of two types. Domestic outbuildings included smokehouses, kitchens, privies, wash houses, milk houses, and spring houses. Agricultural dependencies, buildings used in the everyday operations of a farm, include barns and sheds for storing equipment, supplies, crops, and feed and various shelters for livestock, including chicken coops, cow and hog pens, stables, and mule barns. Finally, there is the farm landscape itself that can include fields, pastures, streams, hills, and ravines. In the case of Currituck County, the landscape could also entail Currituck Sound as well as various marshes and rivers.

The typical Currituck County farm varied little in design. Surviving properties, old photographs, and oral histories indicate that, in the majority of cases, the farmhouse faced a road. With farm properties situated along Currituck Sound, the main house usually faced the water. Almost always a detached kitchen was built within walking distance to the rear of the house. Outbuildings, which usually included a smokehouse, privy, and various barns and sheds, were located behind the kitchen. The domestic buildings on these farms could be grouped in various ways: either in a line or a U-shape. Further away from the house and domestic buildings were the agricultural outbuildings; these structures could be grouped close together or scattered about the property, near the fields or pastures. In many cases, a fence separated these outbuildings from one another. Although a sizable slave population lived in Currituck County before the Civil War, no slave dwellings appear to have survived.

The landscape also was an integral component of the farm. Wealthy farmers may have planted formal gardens reminiscent of the great English estates, although no documentation exists to support this contention. Most farmers, however, did plant trees—oaks, cedars, cypress, pecans and pines—nearby their houses. These trees sometimes commemorated a special event, such as a birth, a death, a marriage, or a homecoming. Some trees, known as “marker” trees, are also in evidence, often indicating the number of children in their family. Tree lines also served as visual boundaries for properties. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, farmers began to plant small

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groves of fruit and nut (usually pecan) trees to provide food and additional income for a family. In addition, farmers or their wives and children tended small vegetable and flower plots for their personal use.

In general, though, nature determined the landscape of most Currituck farms. On the majority of the farms in the county, fields surrounded the main house and domestic outbuildings on three sides. Given the generally flat terrain, terracing was not necessary. Many farms had small wooded tracts within their boundaries, which often were a source of additional income. Some county farms included saw mills. Fences were used primarily to prevent livestock from roaming in cultivated fields or to separate agricultural outbuildings and pasture from domestic buildings.

Certainly the most significant grouping of early outbuildings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are known as the McKnight Outbuildings (CK0061) in Shawboro on the plantation named Belville that Thomas McKnight owned in the late eighteenth century. The seven outbuildings, consisting of an office, smokehouse, kitchen, shed, and three barns, span approximately seventy-five years of agricultural outbuilding construction, dating from approximately 1775 to 1850. First documented in a 1972 survey, the outbuildings have remained relatively intact, though all have undergone some alterations and deterioration. The only outbuilding that appears to have survived at from the period of McKnight's ownership is the one-story, mortise-and-tenon framed kitchen located to the north of the main house. Clad in beaded board siding, the front-gable roof building rests on a brick foundation with a brick floor. Rosehead nails are still in evidence. The remaining frame outbuildings appear to date from the later ownership of Dr. Gideon Marchant's in the mid-nineteenth century, including his office, a one-story, frame, front-gable building sheathed with simple weatherboard. The smokehouse stands to the south of the main house. Towards the north, located side-by-side are three frame barns. Although the original house no longer stands, a c.1893 two-story frame I-house was built on the original site of Dr. Marchant's house. Taken together, the house, along with its collection of domestic dependencies and barns offer an interesting picture of what might have passed for a typical mid-to-large-size farm in the county

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during the mid-nineteenth century.

There are a number of historic domestic outbuilding scattered throughout the county, including a detached kitchen such at the Twin Houses (CK0003) in Shawboro and the Caleb Bell House (CK0017) in the Snowden area. Both of these buildings appear to have been built in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Constructed of frame and covered with beaded weatherboard, the side-gable roof buildings also had a large exterior brick chimney with single simple shoulders. Although the kitchen building at the Twin Houses is in ruinous condition, there remains enough of the building to suggest that it was of similar proportions and plan to that at the Caleb Bell property. One earlier kitchen, the Cowell Kitchen (CK0338) dating to approximately 1780, is found in the Sligo area. While appearing to retain its original weatherboard siding, vertical board door and hewn sill plate, the original chimney is gone.

One unusual domestic outbuilding found in the county is a c. 1870 milkhouse at the J.P. Morgan House, also known as Indian Hill Farm (CK0270) in Shawboro. Unlike the traditional milk house that was usually located near the dairy barn, this small one-story, side-gable, frame building, covered with beaded board, sits near the shady, cool area of the kitchen ell. A small hinged door on the west wall opens into a small storage area with galvanized metal trays where the milk was kept.

A symbol of the rapidly deteriorating agrarian landscape is the farm tenant house. An example (CK0148) on Buster Newbern Road near Jarvisburg, stands alone in a field. The small one-story, frame, side-gable roof house is covered with a variety of sidings, including beaded weatherboard, board and batten and vertical board and rests on brick piers. The original building appears to have been a small and simple two-room house with a shed-roof porch addition that was later enclosed. There are two entrances on the front, one of which is an older four-panel door. Surviving window openings contain 6/6 wood sash. The interior of the house, like the exterior, reveals a dwelling that was solidly built with beaded board walls.

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**Significance**

The few significant farm complexes found in the county survey are fragmentary at best. Because in many cases, the outbuildings have been altered or the original farmhouse is gone or also significantly altered, none of these properties are eligible for consideration as complexes. However, the farm complexes remain important historically in understanding the role of agriculture and the contributions of Currituck farmers from the small yeoman farmers of the early settlement and nineteenth centuries to the truck and subsistence farmers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is possible that individual outbuildings may be considered for individual eligibility for their architectural significance as rare surviving examples of a particular building type or method of construction. However, in the case of Currituck County, no surviving outbuilding merits individual consideration.

**Registration Requirements**

In order for a farm complex or individual component of a farmstead to be eligible for the National Register, it must meet certain registration requirements. First is the basic requirement that the property or majority of buildings, structures and field patterns on the farm should be fifty years or older. The farm and its components should illustrate one or more themes or periods in the region's agricultural development and retain integrity in overall design, materials, and workmanship. Farm complexes should retain integrity of location and setting, as well as an integral arrangement of buildings, structures and landscape features such as ponds, fields, and fences. For an entire farm complex, components making up the entire farmstead--including dwellings, outbuildings, landscape features, and other contributing elements--determine integrity. Individual buildings and structures may have been altered or moved within the complex without affecting the integrity of the entire complex. In fact, such alterations or moves can often reflect changes in agricultural methods and are therefore important for understanding farm techniques. In the case of a collection of outbuildings,

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the integrity or presence of a dwelling does not necessarily determine the eligibility of the farm property.

The integrity of the farmhouse can be somewhat lower than that of a dwelling under consideration for individual eligibility. Exterior remodeling that includes any replacement siding, particularly vinyl, aluminum, or another synthetic siding, should not compromise integral architectural or decorative details, including overall form, fenestration or other noteworthy details. Interior integrity is desirable, but not essential in this case. If the dwelling's integrity is greatly compromised, the building would be considered a non-contributing element of the farm complex. In determining the integrity of the exterior and interior of an outbuilding, evidence of original construction should be taken into consideration. Eligibility as a contributing resource would also be determined by whether or not the building was constructed during the period of significance and the building's overall integrity.

**Property Type Two: Dwellings**

**Introduction**

The majority of residences in Currituck County were neither designed nor built by architects or master craftsmen. Nor were they designed with one particular architectural style in mind. They do, however, fall under the category of "vernacular architecture." This term is used broadly to describe housing forms that imitate academic styles, and houses produced by industrialization and cultural standardization. An even better and more humane description comes from architectural historian Cary Carson who defined vernacular architecture as structures built "according to local custom to meet the requirements of the individuals for whom they were intended."<sup>4</sup>

Elaborate or "high style" designs of any type required skilled artisans and craftsmen; as a

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Carl Lounsbury, "The Development of Domestic Architecture in the Albemarle Region," in Swaim, Doug, ed. *Towards Preservation of Place: In Celebration of the North Carolina Vernacular Landscape*. The Student Publication of the School of Design: Volume 26, North Carolina State University, 1978, p. 46.

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result only the wealthy could afford to hire architects, builders, and craftsmen for their houses. However, with the emergence of pattern books in the early nineteenth century such as those by Asher Benjamin, and later the publication of house designs in magazines and the kit house catalogues, the emerging middle class could build homes that at least echoed the high-style designs of the upper class. Instead of handcrafted elements such as carved brackets, moldings or fireplace surrounds, middle-class houses were constructed using standardized lumber, stamped metal, cast plaster molds, or elements chosen from a catalogue of standard millwork. In addition to using design elements that mimicked academic styles, vernacular houses adapted to such regional variations as the local landscape, available building materials, and the skills of local craftsmen or builders.

The houses in Currituck County mirror the distinct and diverse identities and histories of the county in general. As the county still remained divided across political and social lines throughout the historic period, these differences carried over to each area's buildings. Variances in style marked the houses, depending whether they were located in the north including the areas of Moyock, Tulls Creek, Currituck, Coinjock and Sligo, the south which included Powell's Point, Harbinger, Spot, Jarvisburg and Grandy, or the west in the area of Shawboro and Gregory.

The area near the Virginia border tended to reflect the architectural style and taste of the nearby lower Chesapeake area; historically this makes perfect sense given that the first influx of settlers were from that region. One distinct architectural legacy from those early settlers is that of the "Virginia House," a house type developed in the Chesapeake in the latter half of the seventeenth century. This house consisted of a single-story with gable-end chimneys and either a one-room plan or two-room, hall and parlor plan; it is also the first distinctive vernacular house type to emerge in the English colonies.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that the "Virginia House" did not migrate further south; it did though it was not as popular in the northern end of the county. And given the early settlement of the western part of the county in the area of Shawboro, there is little doubt that the building type was used there too.

Because of the loss of early architectural resources whether by neglect, development or

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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nature, the architectural evolution of the southern region of Currituck County is harder to pinpoint. It is not until the late-nineteenth century with the emergence of the Queen Anne style that the area acquired a distinctive flavor still evident today. The southern part of the county also shows a more marked influence of the twentieth-century architecture of the Outer Banks as seen in the lone “flat-top” residence on Churches Island and the small shingle-clad bungalows scattered throughout that area.

Contributing to an understanding of the evolution of Currituck’s architectural history is the 1960 architectural survey, *“Old Homes in Currituck County to 1860,”* originally compiled by Alma O. Roberts and Alice Flora of the Currituck County Historical Society. The study showcased approximately 140 single-family dwellings illustrating many of the architectural characteristics of the early national and antebellum periods. Prior to the Civil War, there was an attempt, especially in the northern area of the county, to keep up with current national architectural trends as seen in the use of the Federal and Greek Revival elements, often as part of regional vernacular stylings from Virginia. While these buildings were, to an extent, present in the southern part of the county, little remains there today in the way of intact structures.

**A. Houses Built Before 1861**

**Description**

Those houses built before 1861 in Currituck County were as diverse as one-room log or frame dwellings to relatively high-style interpretations of the Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival styles. The emergence of these designs suggests that the mainland county’s early builders and homeowners were copying or re-inventing prevailing house styles both in Virginia and the other northeastern counties. The result was expressed in conservative, almost austere exteriors with a minimum of exterior ornaments; where owners showed their wealth was in the small interior details from hand-crafted moldings to fireplace surrounds, and in some instances with different floor plans. And, despite the strong influence from Virginia on the county’s early architecture, the construction

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of brick dwellings during the period prior to the Civil War appears to be nonexistent.

Log construction first appeared in coastal Carolina in the late-seventeenth century. The structures were small and simple, generally consisting of little more than a single room. Log houses took relatively little time to build; within one to two days, a settler could look forward to having some sort of semi-permanent or permanent shelter. Log construction also did not rely on the skills of carpenters or other artisans, thus making the buildings fairly cheap. By 1800, many considered log buildings to be old-fashioned; by the Civil War, log-constructed buildings remained in the realm of the poor. Today, log houses are difficult to find; what few remain have often been incorporated into larger houses. Some of the earliest dwellings in the region would have been log, but none were documented during the course of the survey.

Frame construction appeared in Currituck County most likely in early-to-mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. Given the plentiful wood resources throughout the area, frame construction would also remain the most popular and almost exclusive construction type in the county. Until roughly 1861, frame houses were constructed of heavy timber with mortise and tenon framing and heavy wood pegs. In Currituck County, a handful of houses still stand dating from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries; the majority are found in the northern end of the county in the Shawboro and Moyock areas. The buildings ranged from a story-and-a-half, (a dwelling with an attic-type, low-ceilinged room on the upper floor,) one-and-half-story, to two-story in height, and were two-or-three bays wide. Almost all were one-room-deep dwellings.

**I-House**

The most dominant house form in the county was that of the I-house, whose exterior could express varying degrees of stylistic influences, finishes, and craftsmanship. The house form was especially pervasive in rural areas and dominated from roughly the 1830s well into the first decade of the twentieth. In its larger scale, it emerged as a more popular style throughout the county. Not only did it signal for many, a new prosperity with a much larger, spacious floor plan, it also emphasized a more formal and hierarchal society as several Currituck landowners became slaveholders.

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The I-house form is constant: two-stories in height and single room deep, and at least two rooms in width in a hall-parlor or center hall plan. A side-gable roof usually tops the house. Towards the late nineteenth century, some houses in the county had a central gable piercing the lower front roof slope, perhaps a nod to standardized plans of the Gothic revival and its roof configurations; this variation is often called a Triple-A roof . In mainland Currituck County, the I-house was primarily frame, almost always sheathed with some type of weatherboard and resting on a brick foundation or brick piers. The house was always oriented lengthwise, usually towards the road. The three- or five-bay facades were usually symmetrical in their fenestration, and often there were one or two gable end chimneys. In Currituck County, particularly in the northern end, chimneys were often shouldered and stepped. A stepped base was also a common chimney construction element throughout the county. Bricks patterns either tumbled, that is a row of sloping bricks laid perpendicular to a gable end, or laid in a stylized herringbone was not an uncommon sight. Embellishments were on the simple side;

Many I-Houses contained Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival embellishments which were contemporary to the house or were later additions undertaken to “update” the dwelling. Porches were not limited to the façade; in the majority of houses, shed roof porches were attached to the side or rear of the house or its additions. Two-story porches attached to the façade, although uncommon, did exist in the county. Porch embellishments tended to be refined with Tuscan columns and a simple frieze supporting a hipped roof. Rooflines also maintained an air of simplicity with molded cornices and returns.

**Interior Plans**

**One Room**

Even though Currituck County was among the first settled areas in North Carolina, beginning in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, no dwellings from this period have survived.

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It is probable though, that most of these early houses were built of log and were one-story, or a story-and-a-half in height. The majority were one-room affairs, though depending on the circumstances of the builder may have had a simple hall-parlor plan. What is important to remember about these early buildings was that permanence was not uppermost in most settlers' minds. Many newcomers were restless, staying only long enough to farm until the soil wore out or until better economic opportunities beckoned.

Most one-room structures contained a small loft space above the main room for storage or additional sleeping space, reached by an interior enclosed stair; an entry at the front or side, and one or more windows. The house provided minimum shelter: all activities, including cooking and sleeping, were necessarily confined in a single room. But it had the advantage of being inexpensive and quick to construct, and could easily be enlarged.

A good example of this interior plan is the Alex Dunton House (CK0290) on Narrow Shore Road in Aydlett. Set back from the road and facing the water, the heavy timber frame story- and-a-half, two-bay house is sheathed in plain and beaded weatherboard. Dating approximately from the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the original front block of the house consisted of one room with tongue-and-groove pine floors. The 6/6 wood sash windows feature hand-hewn sills. A small frame breezeway, similarly connects to a frame-and- weatherboard detached kitchen that was built in the mid-nineteenth century. There is nothing fancy about the house; sturdily built to withstand the elements, the dwelling provided the very basic of needs for its inhabitants.

**Hall and Parlor**

During the pre-Civil War period, interior house plans represented in the county in addition to the one-room plan include the hall-parlor plan and the central passage plan. Rectangular in shape, the hall-parlor house was two rooms wide and a single room deep. The plan derived from medieval Welsh and English types and was common in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Virginia; given Currituck County's close proximity to the Virginia border, it is not surprising that settlers moving into the area would bring this house plan with them, and it is the most common plan of the country's

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surviving pre-Civil War houses. The entrance into the house almost always opened into the hall, the “public room,” that was the larger of the two rooms and the center of household activity. It always had a fireplace in the gable end, and it provided a circulation space for sitting and eating. Often the head of household slept in the hall. A stair, usually enclosed and often located in one of the corners next to the fireplace, gave access to a loft used for sleeping. A partition often divided the loft into two sleeping areas corresponding to the hall and chamber below. The parlor, or chamber as it was more often called in the eighteenth-century South, was more private and used primarily for sleeping. A typical exterior illustrating a hall-parlor plan in the area was that of three asymmetrical bays in a window-door-window arrangement on the façade, giving the illusion that the interior had a central passage.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly one of the most notable hall and plan interiors is found in the Banks-Tucker House (CK0178) situated near Caratoke Highway in the Currituck vicinity. Perhaps one of two surviving examples of a late Georgian-style interior, the two-story, side-gable, single-pile house features heavy random plank flooring and its original dado, with raised panels and a molded wainscot cap; horsehair plaster covers the walls, which have frame moldings. The focal point for each room is the floor-to-ceiling, wood, raised paneled fireplace chimneypiece, topped by a molded wood cornice; the north wall chimney cornice has dentils. Each fireplace mantelshelf consists of a simple molded wood cornice.

The c.1815 Twin Houses (CK0003) is another example of a hall-parlor plan. Composed of two identical, two-story, frame, side-gable buildings joined by a passage. Each of the four exterior end brick chimneys display single shoulders; the south side chimneys have smooth tumbled weatherings. Each interior exhibits the Federal style in the mantle pieces and reeded chair rails

Fenestrations varies in the hall-parlor plan houses. For example, the Twin Houses, the c.1815 J.P. Morgan House (CK0010) and the now-gone Samuel Ferebee House (CK0043) in Shawboro,

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<sup>6</sup> Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture: From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period*, pp. 134-140.

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built sometimes in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, were built with two side-by-side front single-leaf, wood paneled entrance doors, allowing family members and guests to enter directly into either room on the façade. The Samuel McHorney House in Barco also has two entrance doors. Unlike the Morgan House, whose interior has been altered, the interior of the McHorney House has remained virtually unchanged. Though given an 1869 building date, there is evidence that suggests the house had an earlier construction date.

Central Passage

The hall-and-parlor plan generally gave way to the central passage plan during the late eighteenth century signaled the residents' desire to regulate more closely visitors' access to their domestic spaces. The floor plan of the house consisted of two rooms symmetrically situated on each side of a central passage. In one-and-half- and two-story houses, the passage contains the staircase. The central passage house plan was also more flexible in that the design was used for buildings one or two rooms deep. A number of the center passage dwelling built in Currituck County prior to the Civil War also embraced the I-House form.

Scholars have suggested that the central passage to be a response to the southern climate, where large central spaces running the depth of the house were built to catch cool summer breezes. It has also been suggested that the central passage was introduced as a means of enforcing certain spatial relationships between the family and outsiders. The passage served as a circulation space, creating a buffer between the public and private spaces of the interior and allowing direct access to rooms without having to pass through other rooms. Central passage houses often had a wing, or ell, built perpendicularly to the rear facade giving the entire plan the appearance of an L or T in shape. These wings often contained kitchens and other service rooms, although kitchen usually remained in detached buildings until the late nineteenth century.

The Joshua Baxter House (CK0011), built by Baxter, a local Currituck carpenter, sometime in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, is an early example of a center-hall, double-pile plan, an unusual type found in the county. The one-and-a-half-story, three-bay, side-gable dwelling originally

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had two gabled dormers on the front slope, which were later removed. Certainly one of the most visually striking features of the dwelling are the two asymmetrically placed exterior end chimneys, laid in common bond, with corbelled caps and stepped shoulders. Other original details include the single-leaf, six-paneled entrance door with its five-light transom and the first floor's 6/6 wood sash windows.

**Side Hall**

Every so often, local residents broke with prevailing taste and building tradition. Some builders in the northern area of the county rejected the traditional hall-parlor plan or center-passage and instead opted for a side-passage design that consisted of two rooms. The rooms were designed with one behind the other with a passage running along one side. These dwellings were often two-stories in height with a side-gabled roof. The entrance to these house opened into a side hallway that also featured a staircase leading to the second floor. The side-hall plan is distinctive for a rural county as the design was more often seen in villages and towns.

One example of the side-hall plan is seen in Barco in the c.1850 Simmons-Morris House (CK0331). This unique single-family dwelling is distinctive for its two-story porch, a porch style not seen very often in the county. This modest house is sheathed in plain weatherboard, with double cornerboards, i.e. vertical boards attached to corner of the house, further accentuating the building's walls. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal, has overhanging eaves with heavy cornice returns, a boxed cornice and a simple frieze. Square wood posts support the shed roof façade porch; the second story has a turned wood balustrade. Unlike many of the houses in the county that favored a central entrance, the side entrance of the Simmons-Morris House with its original four-light transom and two-light paneled sidelights. Molded wood drip hoods are found over the original pegged 2/2 wood sash windows. The interior is relatively intact and features the original heart of pine floors, four-paneled doors, and parlor fireplace surround with fluting, scrolled brackets and

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central molded, incised panel.

A variation of the side-hall plan is the cross-hall plan, with the plan turned ninety degrees so that the passage runs the full width of the gable-front façade with a central entrance. One of the most notable examples of this plan in northeastern North Carolina is Culong (CK0006), the Shawboro residence built by Thomas Cooper Ferebee in 1812. Of all the areas in Currituck County, Shawboro, home to many of the county's earliest and wealthiest residents, is probably the richest and most diverse architecturally with regard to buildings constructed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Culong, the 1812 residence built by wealthy landowner Thomas Cooper Ferebee (CK0006), is noted for its reserved Federal styling. The two-and-a-half-story, three-bay dwelling rests on an English basement foundation, the only one of its kind in the county, and was originally sheathed with cypress weatherboard. Further distinguishing Culong from its neighbors is its front-gable roof orientation, in an area where the side-gable roof form dominated. At one time, two exterior end brick chimneys with double shoulders were attached to the rear gabled wall. The interior of the house also breaks with the more traditional hall-parlor plan in its long entrance cross-hall, flanked to the rear by two rooms. These two rooms feature paneled wainscoting and simple Federal fireplace mantels. A similar footprint and plan are seen in the John Humphries House (CK 0052), and the Cosey Etheridge House (CK0032), both built in 1820, not far from Culong. The homes were originally part of the larger Ferebee land holdings; and were according to some sources, among six built along similar lines as Culong.<sup>7</sup> However, the Humphries House is the lone survivor of the six, and along with Culong, remains one of the few front-gable roof dwellings in the county.

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<sup>7</sup> "John Humphries House," North Carolina State Survey, September 7, 1972.

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**Architectural Styles**

Georgian

The Georgian style in America is often viewed as the second phase of American Colonial architecture; the style not only marks the emergence of a more formal design and plan in American architecture, it also signaled the arrival of a wealthy upper middle class. The style came to America from England in the form of pattern books, illustrations and other images which detailed both exterior and interior elements. For many Americans, the incorporation of the style showcased prestige and wealth. But like other architectural styles in America, the Georgian style was open to interpretation; the builder was limited only by whatever available materials there were and the availability of skilled craftsmen. The style would eventually fade from popularity after the American Revolution when Americans sought to cut many of its cultural associations with England.<sup>8</sup>

Buildings constructed in this style were typically geometrical and symmetrical. Houses could be one or two stories in height; roofs varied between gable-side, gambrel and hipped. The symmetry of the style carried over too with the evenly balanced windows and door openings. Larger homes were further distinguished by the addition of hyphens and wings to the main block. Depending on the region, the buildings were constructed of clapboard, weatherboard or brick; exterior decoration was Classical in design with denticulated and molded cornices and pedimented and paneled entrance doors topped by fanlights. Chimneys were either located at the end or center of the house.

Georgian interiors were also wedded to various the same motifs as found on the house's exterior. Aided by pattern books and images, any American who was wealthy enough to afford the artisans could have the same kind of detailing found in the homes of English upperclass. Paneled doors and walls, built-in cupboards, ceiling cornices that embraced everything from simple moldings to full Classical entablatures could be found in the American Georgian interiors. In many cases, one

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Calloway, Elizabeth Cromley, and Alan Powers, *The Elements of Style*, (Richmond Hill, Ontario: Firefly Books) p. 108.

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wall which often featured the fireplace was paneled with the other walls covered with either plaster or wallpaper.

There are no surviving exterior examples of the Georgian style in Currituck County, but the Tucker-Banks House (CK0178) located on Caratoke Highway, perhaps contains the only surviving example of a late Georgian-style interior. The dwelling retains its original hall-parlor plan with the majority of its details intact. Both rooms have heavy plank flooring and original dado, which features raised panels and a molded wainscot cap; horsehair plaster covers the walls, which have frame moldings. The focal point for each room, however, is the floor-to-ceiling, wood, raised paneled fireplace chimney piece. Both pieces are topped by a molded wood cornice; the north wall chimney cornice has dentils. Each fireplace mantel shelf consists of a simple molded wood cornice.

Federal

The Federal style of architecture emerged as the dominant architectural style for American buildings from approximately 1780 to 1840. Historically this period was a time in which the young American nation, having won its independence from England, set out to define its character and position in the world. The Federal style, noted for its adaptation of ancient Greek and Roman architectural elements, became highly popular in the United States not only for the classical associations with the ancient democracies of Athens and Rome, but because of its elegant and sophisticated expressions of style. The style would be found throughout the nation from large cities to small villages, from government buildings, religious institutions and dwellings.

Typically, a Federal style house is a simple square or rectangular box, two or three stories high and two rooms deep. Some Federal styled homes have been made larger, modified with projecting wings, attached dependencies or even both. For example, exterior decoration in Federal styles and designs is generally confined to a porch or entry element. Compared to a Georgian house, the columns and moldings in Federal architecture are narrow and rather simple.

Home to many of the county's earliest and wealthiest residents, Shawboro is probably the richest and most diverse architecturally with regard to buildings constructed in the first quarter of the

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nineteenth century. Culong, the 1812 cross-hall plan residence built by wealthy landowner Thomas Cooper Ferebee (CK0006), is noted for its reserved Federal styling. The two-and-a-half-story, three-bay front pedimented dwelling rests on an English basement foundation, the only one of its kind in the county, and was originally sheathed with cypress weatherboard. At one time, two rear exterior end brick chimneys with double shoulders were attached to the rear wall. Federal influences found in the interior of the house include the handmade fireplace mantles with simple moldings and wide plank floors.

The c.1825 Caleb Bell House (CK0017), located near Snowden is a two-and-a-half-story, three bay house, has retained much of its integrity. The house is sheathed with beaded weatherboard; the side-gable roof has a boxed and raking cornice and a single, exterior end brick chimney with double shoulders and corbelled cap. An unusual six-light transom marks the central entrance door and the house still has its original 9/6 and 6/6 pegged wood sash windows. The home's Federal influences are best seen in the interior hall room notable for its reeded chair rail molding and a fireplace mantel that features a five-panel surround with raised decoration, a denticular cornice, and pilaster columns. The Grandy Barnard House (CK0016), also located near Shawboro, still retains some of its Federal styling. The two-story, ca. 1820, house is sheathed with beaded weatherboard and pegged 9/9 sash windows on the first floor. The interior of the house is a hall-parlor plan with tongue-and-groove pin flooring; the home's most outstanding feature is the Federal-inspired dado wainscoting with molded wood horizontal panels and a wainscot cap of torus molding. The single-leaf wood doors are six-paneled; on some of the doors is the ghost of the original lockset and oversized strap hinge. A small quarter flight wood stairway leads to the second floor with two large bedrooms.

Greek Revival

No longer content with the Palladian ideals and ancient Roman architecture that influence the Federal style, Americans turned to Greece for inspiration. The result was the emergence of a new

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architectural style in the early nineteenth century: the Greek Revival. The design adhered closely to the Greek orders, proportions and ornament and became symbolic of the new democracy. With its emphasis on pediments, columns and pilasters, even the simplest home could add a Greek Revival element or two to a porch or gable end. Full height porches also began appearing on grander homes, reminiscent of the ancient Greek temples. The style was such that no matter what size the house or pocketbook of the owner, the Greek Revival style was accessible to all.

The transition from the Federal style to Greek Revival, slow in coming to the county, was evident by the 1850s. Built in 1852, one of the best surviving examples of the Greek Revival style in Currituck is the five-bay, Wilson-Broegler House (CK0021) in Moyock. Clad in plain weatherboard with a side-gable roof, the I-House features three exterior chimneys: a single exterior chimney on one gable end and paired exterior chimneys on the other. The chimneys are constructed of 5:1 common bond with double shoulders; an intricate tumbled brickwork pattern is found between the shoulders and the stack areas. One of the strongest expressions of vernacular Greek Revival style in the county is the one-story, entrance porch with a pedimented roof supported by slightly battered and fluted square columns. Similar-styled pilasters flank the double-leaf entrance door with two-light paneled sidelights and a five-light transom.

The Greek Revival influence is restrained in Moyock's Cox House (CK0024), the most outstanding example of a vernacular Greek Revival dwelling in Currituck County. The two-and-a-half-story, five-bay dwelling sheathed in weatherboard is a rare survivor of a pre-Civil War double-pile house in the county and is the only house in the area with paired interior end brick chimneys in the area. Shaded by several large oaks, the side-gable roof features overhanging eaves and a molded cornice; each pedimented gable end features a single 6/6 pegged wood sash window. The second-story central bay opening consists of a large 6/6 wood sash window flanked by 4-light sidelights, echoing the arrangement of the main entrance hipped roof porch with its single-leaf paneled door, transom, and sidelights. A one-story, side-gable, frame and weatherboard kitchen addition is attached to the rear wall of the house.

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The approximately 4500-square-foot interior of the Cox House is almost completely intact. The central hall plan features plaster walls, approximately ten-foot ceilings, random width plank floors and four-paneled single-leaf doors. The house's design also incorporates other interior details not seen anywhere else in Currituck County. Greek Revival, gabled-styled cap trim and molded surrounds adorn all the door and window openings. Four-foot wide paneled pocket doors separate the dining room from the parlor area. The fireplace surrounds are simple post and lintel designs with flat pilasters. The centerpiece of the house is the center-hall, quarter-turn staircase with a Greek-Revival styled round newel post which opens onto a spacious second floor hall. Four bedrooms, each with its own fireplace, are located here; another quarter-flight of stairs leads to the half-story with two smaller bedrooms, most likely used by servants. Another Currituck house, the Wilson-Walcott House (CK0086) located near Moyock, bears a resemblance in form and plan to the Northern-Cox House. However, the dwelling's interior, now altered was not nearly as spacious or refined. The Northern-Cox House stands one of Currituck County's finest examples of the Greek Revival style as well as one of its most elegant homes.

**National Register and Study List Properties**

- CK0003      Twin Houses (NR)
- CK0006      Culong (NR)
- CK0178      Banks-Tucker House
- CK0024      Northern-Cox House

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**B. Houses Built After 1861**

**Introduction**

Like other counties throughout the state, the Civil War marks a distinct turning point in Currituck County's architectural development. Given the wholly rural nature of Currituck County, the impact of the war upon its architectural development was not as dramatic as in other more populous counties or in areas with strong urban centers. Still, the lack of newer architectural styles in the county such as that of the Italianate or Queen Anne suggests if not a provincial attitude on the part of county residents, certainly a more conservative approach to the building of new structures. With few exceptions, the general response to new stylistic trends, which by the late-nineteenth century would include the all-encompassing Victorian styles, would be seen in the updating of porches with various stylistic elements of the Italianate, Queen Anne or other Victorian styles and the popular Bungalow style during the early decades of the twentieth century.

By the end of the Civil War, improvements in construction technology that led to better milling techniques and more dressed lumber, light wood-frame building became standard for constructing buildings in the county. Heavy frame building did not fade away entirely, but was used primarily for the construction of outbuildings. Building with brick was still rare, though during the Post-World War II era, a few brick Colonial-Revival dwellings were built. Brick veneer was more common as seen in the ubiquitous ranch-style houses throughout the county. In some cases, older homes, such as the Sanderson House in Tulls Creek, were bricked over in an attempt to "modernize" the house as well as lower maintenance of the building.

It is entirely possible, too, that building contractors began working in the county, though the first documented appearance of one is not until 1890, with the listing of a building contractor in Coinjock by the name of Jas. Hall listed in *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*. There were also a number of local carpenters who helped build houses; one builder, an African-American

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by the name of Milton Pugh, who worked during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was known as the “Blueprint Carpenter” because of his skills in designing plans for houses in the southern part of the county. A number of Queen Anne-styled dwellings have been attributed to Pugh’s skills. Still in many cases, it was not uncommon for the family to build their own house, with the help of other relatives or friends. Weatherboard sheathing was still the most popular covering, though by the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the use of shingles and board-and-batten became popular.

The two-story, single-pile I-House remained the dominant house type throughout the mid-to-late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century. T-shaped and L-shaped Queen Anne and Colonial Revival dwellings slowly emerged throughout the county as well. The L-shaped form with Queen Anne two-story bay window blocks was especially prominent in the southern part of the county. Colonial Revival houses tended to be built more in the northern end of the county, particularly in the area of Moyock and Tulls Creek, where they tended to resemble the one-and-half-story, side-gable roof with dormered house popularly known as “Cape Cods,” though houses with a Georgian flavor, as seen in elaborate front porches with fluted Classical columns, pilasters and fanlights with tracery, were also built. The emergence of the popular bungalow, usually built as a one-or-one-and-half-story dwelling with an irregular interior plan, resulted in the construction of several small houses, many situated near the highway. In some areas, small groups of bungalows, built by a local builder and differing only in porch or window arrangement, were located near a main road.

One striking development in many of the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century houses was the uniformity ornament both exterior and interior throughout the county. This in part was due to the availability of manufactured milled elements available from area and regional sources such as the Kramer Lumber Company’s catalogue in Elizabeth City. Chamfered porch posts were seen throughout the county and Knotts Island, as were milled scrolled brackets. Fireplace surrounds consisting of simple Ionic columns or fluted square pilasters with molded shelves were seen in many

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houses as were molded and rounded newel posts, some with acorn-shaped tops. Acorn-shaped pendants also were a common element in many staircases as well as rounded and turned balusters. The standardization of such elements allowed many middle-class homeowners to add touches of distinction to their dwellings, yet it also, sadly, demonstrates the loss of a certain degree of the area's vernacular building traditions.

**Italianate**

The Italianate style, derived from architectural elements of the Italian Renaissance, offered an interesting alternative to the classical and ordered symmetry of the Federal and Greek Revival styles. Relying more on an ideal more romantic than academic, Italianate architecture was one of many mid-to-late-nineteenth-century styles that fell under the umbrella of the Picturesque Movement. Coinciding with rising popularity of architectural pattern books, the Italianate style was one of the most derivative styles copied throughout the United States. Highly ornamented, the Italianate style utilized classical columns, elaborate wood brackets along the rooflines, tall, narrow windows, hood moldings and decorative double-leaf entrance doors. Although the style's appeal was largely in urban areas, it did reach the countryside.

One of three examples of the vernacular Italianate style in the county, and the second oldest dwelling in Currituck village, the Walker-Snowden House (CK0082) was built in c.1875. The T-shaped, two-story, five bay, dwelling stands relatively untouched. The side-gable roof features overhanging eaves with heavy wood cornice returns in the gable ends, a boxed cornice, and two interior end brick chimneys with heavy corbelled caps and curved metal hoods. The house is sheathed in weatherboard, has cornerboards, and 2/2 double-hung wood sash windows with molded wood surrounds and heavy molded drip hoods. The central entrance features double-leaf wood entrance doors with a bracketed transom and paneled sidelights. Although the overall exterior appearance is restrained, it is the hipped roof front porch that displays the ornament so closely

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associated with the Italianate style with its molded wood cornice, square wood columns, heavy milled scrolled brackets with decorative scrollwork and bracketed capitals, and sawnwork frieze. An unknown Baltimore carpenter carried out the work and completed the first-story interiors, which, in part, explains some of the home's unique ornamentation. Family accounts state that Mr. Walker himself finished the upstairs interior, including the distinctive two-shelf fireplace mantels with stylized columnettes and paneled surrounds.

Two Italianate-influenced dwellings are found in Shawboro. The first, the Shaw House (CK0008) is more high-style in its appearance. The slightly L-shaped, two-story house is sheathed in weatherboard and features scrolled brackets along the hipped roofline and a third story square tower above the main entrance that evokes Italian villas and lends the dwelling its local name of Cupola House. Windows have bracketed cornices; the hipped roof porch has brackets and incised columns leading to a paneled double-leaf entrance door. The second Italianate house is the Joseph Burgess Morgan House, also known as Indian Ridge Farm (CK0270), that began as a small, two-story, one room dwelling in c. 1847, and that by the 1880s, stood as a five bay I-house with a center-hall plan. The side-gable roof features overhanging eaves, heavy molded cornice and returns, and a single interior end brick chimney with corbelled cap. One of the house's most visually dominant features is the one-story, hipped roof Italianate porch supported by square, wood incised columns with heavy sawn and pierced brackets and frieze. The porch risers flanked by wood wing walls are scalloped. The central entrance consists of the original double-leaf paneled doors with raised round-arched panels. Surrounding the entrance is a four-light transom and two-light paneled sidelight, common features throughout the northern end of the county.

Queen Anne

The Queen Anne style of architecture dominated the late-nineteenth century in the United States. It was a style that emphasized variety of materials and forms, celebrated textures and materials, and above all exuberantly borrowed from other architectural sources ranging from Tudor

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and Jacobean to Classical. The growing availability of pattern books also helped popularize the designs with builders and homeowners. Queen Anne houses were often asymmetrical in massing, and were noted for rich and ornate, even gaudy, exterior detailing. Generally one- to two –stories in height and constructed of wood, brick or stone, houses might have large projecting bays, corner towers and even turrets. Roofs often incorporated complex rooflines featuring gable and hipped styles; gable ends were often decorated with pierced and scrolled bargeboards, stickwork, pendants, or brackets. Porches were often showcases for elaborately milled columns, brackets and balusters. The Queen Anne style was showcased everywhere: from fancy seaside resort residences, urban rowhouses, and rural country dwellings.

One of the better examples of a late nineteenth-century Victorian dwelling in Currituck County is found in Powells Point is the Walter Scott Newburn Jr. House (CK0144). The two-story, five-bay, single-pile frame building was constructed ca. 1860 and was later updated. The Queen Anne influence can be seen on the exterior, particularly in the gable roof ends which feature decorative pierced wood bargeboards with spindlework. A smaller central gable located on the façade is distinguished by a covering of saw tooth wood shingles with a wood diamond-shaped louvered vent.

The interior of the house has remained mostly untouched. The small entrance hall has a beaded board ceiling with beaded board wainscoting. A half-landing open stairway to the second floor has a turned balustrade with heavy acorn-styled pendants. All of the entrance surrounds in the house feature fluted pilasters with bullseye cornerblocks and molded base blocks; the same type of cornerblocks are also used in the window surrounds. Fireplace surrounds tend toward the elaborate; the dining room fireplace, for instance, has a scalloped cornice, a raised molded centerpiece with a bullseye medallion and square pilasters with the same bullseye motif in the center and molded base block. Slightly curved simple brackets support the molded mantle.

Situated back from Caratoke Highway and partially obscured by century-old magnolia and pecan trees is the West-Meiggs House (CK0173) in Sligo. The late nineteenth-century house is unusual for its elaborate use of the Queen Anne style. Unlike the dominant front-gable roof, two-

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story, projecting bay window block seen in many of the Queen Anne houses in the South, the West-Meiggs House displays bay window blocks on the northwest and southwest corners of the façade as well as the south and north gable ends of the house. What remains of the original Queen Ann ornamentation is seen in the bargeboards featuring a small drop pendant and semi-circular milled and pierced ornament, the small two-light window openings, the pedimented pent, and the original fish-scale shingles since covered with vinyl on the east, north, and south gable ends. Also notable are the two brick chimneys with corbelled caps and brick round arched hoods; the only other examples of this chimney type are seen in the single interior chimney at the Currituck Jail and a house near Moyock. The original entrance to the home is marked by double-leaf paneled entrance doors with raised arched panels, a transom, and sidelights.

In Moyock, four consecutive generations of the Martin J. Poyner family have called a rambling two-story Queen Ann-styled dwelling home (CK0237). Built in 1902, the T-shaped house, covered with novelty siding, is similar in plan and footprint to dwellings seen in the southern part of the county, particularly the slightly projecting two-story front-gable roof bay block on the facade. However, these buildings are comparatively modest, even restrained when compared with the Poyner dwelling with its Eastlake influences that celebrate the exuberance of the Queen Anne style. The hipped roof wrap-around porch features a spindle frieze and unusually detailed milled and pierced brackets. Another unusual bracket styling is also seen underneath corner edges of the projecting two-story, front gabled bay block. The north, south and west gable ends of the building are also highly ornate in style. In addition to the molded cornice and returns, the gables feature narrow diagonally cut wood strips arranged in a pattern that simulates a sunburst styling. Anchoring the gable ends are paired, single-light hinged windows with molded drip hoods with saw tooth ornament. The pattern is repeated with the building's 2/2 wood sash windows that also feature heavy scrolled, console-like brackets.

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Bungalow

One of the most dominant architectural styles in America during the early twentieth century was the Bungalow style. Characterized by square plans, low-pitch gable or hipped roofs, bungalow dwellings also featured large porches that spanned the façade, often supported by slightly tapered columns resting on brick piers. The design emphasized the horizontal lines of a building and was a sharp contrast to the heavy vertical emphasis of Victorian era architecture. Next to the Colonial Revival style, the Bungalow style remains one of the more popular architectural designs in the United States.

One of the more important design concepts of the American bungalow was that it be integrated into its natural setting. A good example of this philosophy can be seen in the c.1915 bungalow and grounds of the J. R. Houska House (CK0123) at 143 Owens Beach in Harbinger. Situated on a well-tended lot filled with trees, native plantings, and seasonal flowers, the house exemplifies the most typical bungalow variation in the county in its overall rectangular form with a front-gable roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails, the small 1/1 wood sash window in the front gable end, and its slightly off-center entrance door. Its restrained Craftsman detailing is seen in the one-story hipped-roof porch with exposed rafter tails supported by the original slightly tapered square columnettes resting on brick piers and two slightly tapered square columns.

Currituck County bungalows often incorporated the characteristic Craftsman double-hung 3/1 sash windows, a roofline with overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails, and slightly off-center Craftsman-styled paneled doors with vertical lights as seen in the John Gallop House (CK0125) in Harbinger. An identifying element of the Gallop House is the Palladian window in the front gable, a neoclassical element that also distinguishes several other Currituck County bungalows, including the Aubrey Snowden House (CK0) in Currituck. The front gable also occasionally includes additional embellishment. For example, the Palladian window at the Gallop House has a small horizontal piece of wood that appears to have once simulated a "King Post" within a decorative bargeboard. The

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Snowden House Palladian window features diagonal muntins.

Another popular bungalow variety in the county is one and a half stories with a side-gable roof and long shed dormers on the front and rear, as exemplified by the Colin Doxey House (CK0201) on Knotts Island. In Moyock, the Stafford-Pruden House (CK0246) displays the typical Craftsman style elements as seen in the 3/1 Craftsman windows, entrance door and one-story hipped roof porch supported by battered wood columns resting on brick piers, but instead of the usual informal, irregular interior plan, the house features the traditional center hall at the main entrance.

A curving gravel road to the west of busy Knotts Island Road leads to one of three documented Sears kit houses (CK00210) Currituck County. The house pattern, known as the “Madelia” bungalow model was featured in the Sears Kit House catalogues from 1918 to 1922. According to the company, the model was one that “industrial concerns like to provide for their manager and foreman. It makes a very classy dwelling with its colonial windows, private side porch and colored Fire-Chief Shingle Roll Roofing.” The home, built c. 1925 is located at the edge of the Mackey Island Wildlife Refuge, and sits on a nicely landscaped lot with open fields and woods surrounding the dwelling. Certainly one of this building’s unique features is its jerkinhead roof, with heavy cornice returns and jerkinhead dormers on the east and west roof slopes, a roof type not seen anywhere else in the county. A hipped roof hood supported by exaggerated three-piece shaped knee braces marks the off-center entrance door. Because Sears kit houses could be customized, it appears that the original owner kept the wood balustrade design but not the brick wing walls seen in the original design and Sears ad. Other distinguishing characteristics include the asymmetrical fenestration that was a “signature” of Sears kit houses.

The Balance-Odum House (CK0260) near Currituck village, began as a modest one-room frame schoolhouse for Tulls Creek. The building was purchased by the Norman Ballance family sometime in the early 1930s and then moved. The schoolhouse underwent a dramatic transformation; the original one room was expanded to two rooms on the first floor and a half-story top addition with a long, five-bay shed roof dormer was added. The current owner has stated that a portion of the Balance remodeling was done with Sears kit house materials and plan, though this cannot be

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verified. With the addition of the half-story, the roofline was changed from a side-gable to a gambrel roof with slightly flared eaves. The overall effect created a Dutch Colonial bungalow house with a decidedly Craftsman-feel as seen in the engaged front porch supported by battered wood columns resting on brick piers.

Colonial Revival

The most dominant domestic architectural style of the twentieth century is the Colonial Revival. Drawing on an idealized colonial past, American architects and builders studied a variety of colonial and early Republic styles. The Georgian and Federal styles provided the bulk of stylistic elements, though other styles such as the Dutch Colonial were popular too. Colonial Revival dwellings often featured symmetrical floor plans, gabled roofs with dormers, classically detailed porches with columns, and pedimented windows and doors. Dwellings in this style were constructed both of brick and frame and generally one-and one-half to two-stories.

One of the most striking examples in the county of the Dutch Colonial Revival is the Lee-Creekmore House (CK0253) built in 1870 by Jerome Bunnill Lee. The original one-story house later underwent renovations that gave it its Dutch Colonial look. In 1914, two rooms were added to the south end, changing the initial plan from a hall-parlor to that of a central passage. The original side-gable roof was modified in 1935 when a second floor was added and a gambrel roof with heavy molded cornice returns, a simple frieze board and a five bay shed dormer located on the east and west slopes. The east-facing single-leaf entrance door is one of the more unusual ones in Currituck County consisting of ovulo-molded panels featuring long elliptical-shaped incised panels. Flanking the entrance is a 6-light transom with 4-light paneled sidelights.

A simple vernacular interpretation of the Colonial Revival style is the Robert Lee House (CK0226) in Moyock. Most likely dating from the first decade of the twentieth-century, the modest asphalt-shingled house presents a front-gable roof temple façade with a molded boxed cornice and cornice returns. The original 2/2 wood sash windows have small drip hoods. A full length hipped

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roof porch has been enclosed and features a molded wood cornice. The Garland Humphries House (CK0235), also in Moyock, offers a more Federal-styled interpretation of the Colonial Revival as seen in its side-gable roof with molded wood cornice and frieze and small lunette windows in the gable ends. A slightly projecting one-bay front-gable porch supported by paired, square vinyl-covered columns marks the central single-leaf six-paneled wood entrance door with an elliptical fanlight with tracery, flanked by four-light raised panel sidelights and a single wood square engaged column.

American Foursquare

A house form that is considered to be a part of the Colonial Revival movement is the American Foursquare. From the 1890s to the late 1930s, this two-story, square box design was conceived in part as a reaction to the ornate fussiness of Queen Anne architecture. This did not stop builders from incorporating Queen Anne or other late Victorian elements to the form, as well as Colonial Revival or Craftsman ornament.

A well-maintained variation of the American Foursquare style is seen in the Tulls Creek area at the J.W. Poyner House (CK0250). The c. 1911, weatherboard dwelling typifies the box-like shape and hipped roof form of the Foursquare. The house's details are simple and restrained: the dwelling's exterior walls are articulated by double cornerboards; the hipped roof has overhanging eaves, molded cornice and simple frieze; an interior brick flue with a corbelled cap is located on the rear south roof slope. Two-pane sidelights above raised panels and a three light transom mark the slightly off-center single-leaf wood entrance door. The most unusual feature of the house is its one-story, wrap-around porch with hipped roof supported by battered wood columns resting on brick piers with a simple wood balustrade.

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Modernism

Adapting from the modern European architectural influences such as the Bauhaus in Germany and French architect Le Courbesier, American architecture began looking more to the future than to the past in the early twentieth century. With the emergence of Modernism, particularly the International Style, many American architects rejected the use of historical styles and ornament. The emphasis now was on function and utility which expressed in pure expression of line, open space, and the use of industrial materials, especially metal and glass. For the majority of Americans, whose taste in housing was still fairly conservative, modernism, at least in domestic architecture, was too abstract, austere, and uncomfortable. As a result, the style made little headway except for a few places such as California.

A trip to California in the 1940s provided the inspiration for an International-styled house located on South Albetuck Road in Point Harbor (CK0116). The clean lines of the building are further accentuated by the large, well-tended one-acre lot and groups of plantings. The one-story concrete block house is covered with whitewashed stucco and rests on a wide concrete pad. Concrete coping caps the flat roof, while a projecting hipped pent runs across the front projecting block of the house. A small concrete patio enclosed by low brick planters adorns the southwest corner of the front. Window openings include metal tripartite casements, which consist of a central fixed light flanked by two 4-light metal casement windows. The blueprints for the house were drawn up by architect Al W. Smith of Elizabeth City on March 30, 1949; local contractor Ernest Lang was hired to build the house.

The region's best known domestic examples of the International-style were the highly popular cottages called "Flat Tops" that were built in the late 1940s at Southern Shores on the Outer Banks according to designs by North Carolina artist Frank Stick. The inspiration for the Flat Top design was drawn in part from Stick's observations of resort architecture in other locations of the southeast such as Florida. The only representative example of a Frank Stick-inspired "Flat Top" house in Currituck County is the Wayne Twiford House (CK0336) on Church's Island. Next to the

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International-style Griggs Tract House on South Albetuck Road (CK0116), the Twiford House is perhaps the only other historic contemporary dwelling located in the county. Built during the years 1952-1953, the one-story, concrete block dwelling is and features a flat roof with large overhangs, metal window awnings, and paired wood 1/1 sash window openings. The house was designed by, and built for Wayne Twiford, former caretaker at the Monkey Island Hunt Club.

**National Register and Study List Properties**

- CK0008 Shaw House (NR)
- CK0270 J.B. Morgan House
- CK0253 Lee-Creekmore House
- CK0116 Griggs Tract House, Point Harbor

**Significance**

Houses are significant as reflections of the diverse architectural trends over a period of time. In the case of Currituck County, these various stylistic differences illustrate local building traditions and adaptations of regional and national styles. These architectural expressions are more than the embracing of a particular element, material or style; they also define the county's social and economic history too. Buildings constructed before the Civil War, while once plentiful have dwindled in number. Those that do remain provide important clues to understanding settlement patterns, while explaining economic and social diversity within the county. For dwellings built after the Civil War, the problem is not nearly as acute, though many of these houses are also in danger of disappearing. In Currituck's case, of particular interest is the gradual re-orientation of houses towards the new roads and highways being built throughout the county. Not only does this reflect the changing patterns of transportation in the area, region and state; it also marks a dramatic move away from the county's historical "highway" of the waters of Currituck Sound and nearby rivers.

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**Registration Requirements**

In order for a dwelling to be eligible for listing on the National Register, it must meet certain registration requirements. Individual houses must retain a high level of integrity in order to be considered eligible under Criterion C for architectural significance. Dwellings that are part of a farm complex or in a district where, in either case, it is the group rather than the individual components that are of primary importance may exhibit changes such as the appearance of modern siding or replacement of windows, yet may be considered contributing elements of the property as long as identifying characteristics have been retained. Due to their rarity, houses dating from the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, can sustain more alterations than numerous later dwellings and still be considered individually eligible as long as the design, general plan, important stylistic features, and most original materials are largely intact. In rare cases, houses with synthetic siding may be eligible under Criterion B as long as the building's original characteristics remain intact and the replacement siding has the appearance of the original.

In very rare cases, a house with synthetic siding may be eligible under Criterion C in the area of architecture if all the other original features remain intact and the architectural elements that lend the house its significance express a style that was important in the county's architectural history that is now extremely rare. Most potentially eligible houses occupy their original sites, although in rare cases, buildings of outstanding or architectural merit that have been moved may remain eligible if the architectural integrity is maintained and the new site, as well as the building's placement on it, is similar to the original. In addition, the majority of houses in Currituck County illustrate the progression of stylistic influences as well as different building technologies through various additions or modifications. Houses that have been changed over time may be eligible under Criterion C in the case where alterations made at least fifty years ago retain integrity of design, materials and workmanship.

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**Property Type 3**

**Introduction**

The institutional buildings of Currituck County—churches, schools and government—provide a fascinating glimpse into the cultural and social history of the area. Because of the county’s slow development, the fierce autonomy of its communities, and the lack of a central transportation system of roads, the development of institutional-type architecture was sparse. Few buildings were architect-designed; the majority was often built through the use of existing plans, utilizing local resources and the labor of the community.

Churches were the most common institutional buildings first built in the county, often beginning as a simple one-room frame structure. All of the earliest churches from the eighteenth century are gone. The earliest extant churches date to the 1850s; all have been altered, but some still display evidence of Greek Revival stylistic influences. By the late nineteenth century, the Gothic Revival style reigned, its influences seen in both white and African American churches through variations on gothic-arched art glass windows and entrances. Overall, the footprints of these small country churches were almost identical: a rectangular block with a front-gable roof, dominated by a tower whether placed at the side or in the center of the facade. Other churches favored tall central steeples. Stained glass windows were a rarity; most churches favored colored Queen-Anne styled art glass openings or plain glass.

By the mid-twentieth century, many churches, in an effort to modernize, began covering their churches with brick veneer laid in a stretcher bond pattern. Others sheathed the buildings with aluminum or vinyl sidings. In many of these cases, the siding was applied in such a manner as to obscure vented openings of a church belfry or vents found in the steeple or tower. Entrances were enclosed with new vestibules and modern glass and steel commercial-style doors replaced the original wood paneled entrances. In some cases, the remodeling yielded a new coherent design on the exterior while retaining key original features in the interior. Church interiors followed a plan

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with one or two aisles dividing groups of pews; the pulpit was located at the center rear of the church. In terms of additions, most every church in Currituck was modified with at least one rear addition that might house a kitchen, classrooms, or offices.

The development of schools in the county began with small, one-room schoolhouses, some of which remained in operation well into the twentieth century. Clad in weatherboard with a front-gable roof and a front and rear entrance, these tiny buildings were found in most every Currituck community. It would not be until the 1920s, with the philanthropic efforts of northern publisher Joseph P. Knapp, that brick school buildings would come into being with prominent flourishes of the then-popular Colonial Revival style. A unique aspect of the county's educational building was the construction of the distinctive Colonial Revival-style teacherages, also underwritten by Knapp in four different areas of the county.

Government buildings in Currituck are few. With the exception of the brick County Courthouse and Jail, the historic buildings used for government functions were simple frame and weatherboard post offices found in most every community. Usually one room with a front-gable roof, these small buildings were a potent symbol of each town or village's identity. Only two of these post offices still stand—in Currituck and Shawboro—although both have long since been empty.

**Description**

**A. Churches**

The rural white churches of Currituck County usually were associated with some denomination of either the Baptist or Methodist churches. The buildings were wood frame and covered with some type of weatherboard. Front-gable roofs dominated; the extent of exterior ornament depended usually on the wealth of the congregation. Early historical records show that at least one church building was standing prior to the Revolutionary War in Indiantown, near the

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present site of Shawboro. Other congregations established their churches throughout the county; some of these sites included Coinjock, Grandy, Moyock and Tulls Creek. Although there are several church communities that date their beginnings from the early nineteenth century, their churches date predominantly from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. In many cases too, the current church might be the second or third building to be constructed by the congregation as needs or nature, dictated. During the course of this survey, approximately twenty-two churches were documented, divided almost equally between white and African American.

One of the earliest surviving Methodist church buildings is the c.1855 former Moyock Methodist Church (CK0062), with its imposing temple-front façade. Illustrating elements of both the Greek and Gothic Revival styles, the church was the second Methodist Church built on that site. Based on early photographs, the original frame and weatherboard building was a large one-story square block. The front pedimented pent gable end had overhanging eaves and a molded cornice. Breaking the temple-front roof line was an engaged frame and weatherboard, two-story slightly projecting central tower with steeple. A pent roof articulated the first and second levels of the tower; the steeple and spire was marked by front-gable openings on all elevations and a pyramidal roof. The central double-leaf paneled entrance doors were flanked by gothic-arched 1/1 sash windows containing art glass. The building is now a private residence and has been heavily altered, though the original footprint of the building is still evident.

The introduction of the Gothic Revival style had a deep impact on American church architecture, particularly in the South. The melding of the new picturesque ideal in religious buildings and its relationship to nature created a romantic and benevolent pastoral ideal, symbolized by the country church. With the incorporation of Gothic Revival elements such as Gothic arched windows, stained glass, steep gabled roofs, towers and steeples, any small church could aspire to the same plane as the grandest cathedral. In Currituck County, the Gothic Revival emerged as the most dominant architectural style in the county's religious buildings.

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Organized in 1893 as the Coinjock Missionary Baptist Church, today's Coinjock Baptist Church stands as one of the more architecturally interesting Gothic Revival style churches in Currituck County. Built c.1909, the 40 x 60 foot building sheathed in weatherboard, was designed by Mr. Henry Welstead, an English émigré and carpenter, keeping in mind the building's function and the financial means of the congregation. The influence of the popular Gothic Revival style is seen in the church's Gothic-arched art glass windows and entrance doors. Welstead's skill, not only in carpentry but also as an engineer, figure prominently in the church's interior, particularly in the tray ceiling of beaded board in the sanctuary which today still provides excellent acoustics. The interior walls also of beaded board, were finished in hard oil which has never required any refinishing since it was first applied over a century ago. Welstead's design also included another unique feature as seen in the sanctuary's sloping wood floor, perhaps the only floor of its kind found in the county's religious architecture.

By 1953, the congregation had grown large enough to warrant additional building space, as seen in the three-story brick addition that houses classrooms, storage space, restrooms, and the furnace room. Like many churches in the area, Coinjock Baptist covered its original weatherboard siding with brick veneer in 1955, a modification made by many rural churches for both aesthetic and maintenance purposes. Perhaps more than most rural churches in the county, the Coinjock Baptist Church represents the slow evolution of a small country church that not only changed in terms of the needs of its congregation, but also tried to keep abreast of changing architectural tastes in rural church architecture.

The Knotts Island United Methodist Church (CK0211) is unique among churches in the county in its interpretation of the Victorian or Late Gothic Revival style. Unlike other churches in the area which borrow from the Gothic style primarily through the incorporation of Gothic-arched windows and entrances, the Knotts Island United Methodist Church illustrates some of the style's basic characteristics with its large massing, its emphasis on verticality with the church's ornate steeple, the broad cross-gables of the roofline, the heavy moldings used on the exterior and even the simple collar beam in each gable. Built in 1911, the large one-story, frame and beaded weatherboard

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building rests on a foundation of cast concrete block, a feature not seen anywhere else on the island or in the county. Directly above is a wide molded wood water table that wraps around the church. The double cornerboards of the church are channeled and capped with small molded wood capitals that join the fascia. The interior is no less impressive with walls and a tray ceiling of dark tongue and groove beaded board laid in diagonal panels. One of the church's unique features is the dado panels that are combed and fingered on the church walls. The elegant French gothic arched stained glass windows for the church were given by one of its benefactors, J. P. Knapp.

Like other institutional buildings, church architecture also found expression through the Colonial Revival style. The Pilmoor Memorial United Methodist Church (CK0186) in the village of Currituck was built in 1928 as a memorial to Joseph Pilmoor, one of two English missionaries sent to North Carolina, and is the only brick-built church in the county. Facing east towards the sound, the one-story, Colonial Revival-styled, front-gable block was laid in Flemish stretcher bond with every fourth course of standard Flemish with alternating headers and stretchers. The slate roof features molded cornice returns and cornice and the front gable has a circular louvered vent opening. Brick buttresses line the north and south walls of the building; articulating each bay is a round-arched stained glass window. A slightly projecting, one bay, front-gable vestibule with double-leaf paneled doors marks the central entrance to the church. Two, slightly projecting, side-gable roof blocks, each with a stained glass opening are located near the front entrance of the church. In 2006, a massive addition which included a one-story brick arcade connecting to a two-story brick classroom and office building was built on the south wall of the church.

In 1937, the Moyock Methodist Church congregation moved to a newly-built Classical Revival church (CK0244) on Caratoke Highway. The one-story brick building is laid in stretcher bond; dominating the front façade is a large, one-story, projecting front-gable portico. Its pedimented pent roof is trabeated, with full entablature including dentils and a Doric frieze. Supporting the roof are oversized Tuscan columns. The central entrance to the church consists of modern double-leaf metal commercial one-light doors which replaced the original double leaf wood paneled entrances.

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Surmounting the entrance is a molded frieze similar to those seen at the Cox and Walcott houses, also located in the Moyock area. Distinguishing this frieze is the inclusion of small raised wood crosses as part of the surround. Modern triple sash art glass windows are located along the north and south walls of the church. Attached to the west rear is a one-story hipped roof addition. At one time, a large steeple and spire topped the church.

African American churches are well represented in the county. Like their white counterparts, these religious buildings tended to be influenced by the Gothic or Colonial Revival styles. In most cases, the church design originated with the congregation; carpenters or artisans who belonged to a congregation generally built their churches. Overall, these churches have a simplicity and dignity that go far beyond their basic materials. One distinctive trait of some of the African-American churches documented was the use of a cornerstone on the wood framed buildings.

Typical of the Gothic-styled small country churches found throughout the county is Center Chapel A.M.E. Church (CK0190) located directly south of the Coinjock Colored School on Caratoke Highway. Built sometime between 1890 and 1910, this small one-story frame church was most likely sheathed with weatherboard, which has since been covered with vinyl siding. Still, enough of the church's exterior features remain to compare this church with other African-American churches in the county. At first glance, Center Chapel is remarkably similar in style and form to Weeping Mary Disciples Church in Tulls Creek; both feature front-gable roofs with overhanging eaves and heavy cornice returns; even the location of its interior brick flue on the lower roof slope is identical. However, instead of Weeping Mary's Gothic arched window in the front-gable end, Center Chapel features a lunette window. Double-leaf four-paneled doors flanked by Gothic-arched art glass windows set in rectangular molded wood surrounds mark the central entrance. Another interesting feature of the church is its windows; in addition to the windows mentioned above, the church also has pointed arch 1/1 wood sash, art glass windows with wood pointed arch molded surrounds. Attached to the northeast corner of the façade is a two-story tower with a pyramidal roof; a shed pent articulates each story. The belfry openings have been covered over. Center Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church conveys the signature elements of the Gothic Revival style, particularly through its windows,

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as well as the quiet dignity and simplicity of the small African-American rural church.

Two other churches, Weeping Mary Disciples (CK0219) and Pilgrims Journey (CK0227), both built in the first decade of the twentieth century, bear striking similarities to each other in design and materials that illustrate interesting uses of elements and patterns of the Gothic Revival seen in African-American churches in the county. The one-story building demonstrates many characteristics of a small country church in that it combines high-style elements interpreted in a vernacular form. To illustrate, Weeping Mary has a one-and-a-half-story frame tower with a pyramidal roof located on the northeast corner of the facade, Gothic pointed-arch windows with Queen Anne-style stained glass surrounded by slightly projecting molded surrounds, and a peak-head louvered vent on the east front elevation. Of particular interest are the rear west elevation windows found on the one-story rear addition; the sliding 6/6 lights have stylized brick lintels constructed of header and soldier bricks, molded wood surrounds and a lower brick sill constructed of sailor brick. The windows, along with the building's shaped rafter tails on the roofline, are a good example of a local builder's work and also demonstrate the incorporating of high-style design elements within a vernacular form.

Pilgrims Journey, built in 1907, is a one-story, front-gable block, originally covered with weatherboard. The building is now sided in vinyl; which may have obscured a central window such as those seen on Good Hope A.M.E. and Weeping Mary. However, the roof retains its overhanging eaves with beaded board soffit and shaped curved rafter tails along the north and south slopes. Attached to the northeast wall of the facade is a two-story tower with a pyramidal roof; a pointed arch Gothic window is located in the top east wall. The church still retains the original two entrances; in between is a large pointed arch Gothic art glass window. The same motif repeats itself in the north and south wall 1/1 windows.

The ca.1906 Good Hope A.M.E. Zion Church breaks with the county's traditional early twentieth-century rural country church design. While still an expression of the vernacular Gothic Revival style seen in the county's other African-American churches, Good Hope's focal point is not the two-story side tower, but a central two-story steeple. A flared pent articulates the ground floor

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and lantern; the steeple comprises small pedimented pent gablets and a conical spire. Like other churches, Good Hope underwent modern updating with a 1943 rear addition. Vinyl siding over the original weatherboard and the construction of a one-story, frame and vinyl vestibule that obscures the first story of the church's steeple appear to be later-twentieth century renovations. However, it has retained its Gothic-arched art glass wood sash windows on the north and south walls.

A more dramatic diversion from Currituck's typical African American church design is the Christian Advocate Baptist Church which is also the sole survivor of the small community of Bertha. Though marked with a Gothic inspired pyramidal-roofed side tower similar to that of Weeping Mary Disciples Church, the ca. 1910 T-shaped frame Christian Advocate Baptist Church expresses a more restrained Colonial Revival styling in the front-gable temple façade and the molded boxed cornice with returns. The art-glass windows, unlike the gothic-arched openings seen in other county churches, are rectangular, double-hung sash in simple surrounds. The church also features a nave and transept plan instead of the simple one room plan favored by most churches.

**Study List Properties**

Coinjock Baptist Church CK0175

Knotts Island Methodist Church CK0211

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**B. Schools**

**Description**

Though schoolhouses existed in Currituck County before the Civil War, none have survived. What remains from the historic period are a handful of one-room schoolhouses that were once commonplace throughout the county. A few surviving early twentieth-century schools built for African American students are also still standing in the Moyock, Sligo and Coinjock areas. The favored architectural influence for the majority of these buildings was the Colonial Revival style, in vogue throughout the nation during the period 1890-1930. In the early twentieth century the style was particularly popular for institutional buildings such as schools and courthouses for its symbolic references to America's early history. The overall form emphasized symmetry, classical details such as grouped columns, pedimented roofs, and strong cornice lines. The school building gradually changed over time as well. Early school buildings were frame with a single room. As the county grew and the number of students increased, school buildings became bigger and were often constructed of brick.

Built just around the turn of the century, the Coinjock School (CK0238) represents a typical one-room schoolhouse found in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in Currituck County. Located on Dozier Road in the Tulls Creek area, the wood frame schoolhouse once stood in the village of Coinjock. This building's Colonial Revival influence is seen its smallest details from the front-gable roof and original weatherboard siding, to the overhanging eaves, boxed cornice, and single corner boards that embellish this simple building and its façade. The building has a pair of 6/6 double hung sash with working hinged vertical board shutters on each side. Wood vertical board single-leaf doors mark the gabled entrances.

A stronger expression of the Colonial Revival style is the Churches Island Schoolhouse (CK0334), built sometime between 1900-1910. Residents built the structure from wood milled on the island, as evidenced by the rough-cut joists in the framing. The one-story, three-bay, frame-and-

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beveled weatherboard building was originally located toward the marsh, which lies west of the community. The one-room school building has retained much of its vernacular Colonial Revival character, as seen in its overall symmetry of the front block and the front-gable roof with molded and boxed cornice and heavy cornice returns. Wood surrounds with small hoods mark the windows and door of the school.

Designed from a 1903 book of plans developed by the Raleigh architectural firm of Barrett and Thomson for the North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction is the Grandy School (CK0040). The school, built in 1908, combines late Victorian and Colonial Revival elements, the one-story, four bay, frame and beaded weatherboard, two-room, schoolhouse has a side-gable roof with overhanging eaves and molded cornice. The distinctive façade is accentuated by a large central pedimented gable covered with imbricated wood shingles laid in alternating rows; a sunburst-styled ornament tops the gable eave. A square bell tower with louvered side panels and pyramidal roof with wood finial sits atop the roof's central ridge. The two entrance doors are sheltered by a one-story, one-bay, front-gable, pedimented porch roof supported by turned wood posts.

Constructed in 1911 for Currituck County's rural African American citizens, the Jarvisburg Colored School (CK0055) is notable for being a rare example of a pre-Rosenwald African American school constructed in North Carolina as well as being one of the county's few pre-consolidation school buildings to still exist. The two-story, frame and weatherboard, side-gable building has been completely renovated, and maintains much of its original vernacular Colonial Revival elements including the one-story shed roof enclosed addition flanked by two corner pedimented porches on the façade, the frame and weatherboard bell tower with pyramidal roof and the original four-panel doors.

Situated close to Caratoke Highway near Coinjock is the one-story weatherboard Coinjock Colored School (CK0165). Built c.1919, the side-gable roof building is marked by a slightly projecting central front-gable block with exposed curve-shape rafter ends. Two inset entrance porches flank the central front-gable block. Although funds from a Rosenwald School account were used, the building deviates slightly from the standard design for a two-teacher school. However, the

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cream buff and earth red paint colors interior walls and the walnut-stained wainscoting, and the movable partition between the two classrooms to create a larger space for meetings are identifying features of a Rosenwald School.

The Moyock Elementary School (CK0229), built in 1921, and located on the outskirts of the village of Moyock, is a good example of the Classical Revival influence, a style rarely seen in the county. The Classical Revival style signaled a return to the clean and sparer stylings of classical Greece and Rome after the ornate architectural fussiness of the Victorian period. The style was best suited for institutional buildings such as courthouses, schools and courthouses; materials such as brick, stone and terra cotta were used to create these monumental-type structures. In the case of the Moyock School, the building's Classical Revival elements are concentrated in the central side-gable block which features a large pedimented central gable with molded cornice and a lunette window with molded surround and tracery. The central recessed entrance is marked by a Classical-styled wood surround featuring a full entablature, square fluted pilasters and molded wood triglyphs.

Philanthropist Joseph P. Knapp's belief in education and his commitment to Currituck County provide some of the most interesting examples of educational architecture. Certainly one of his most ambitious projects was the J.P. Knapp Junior High School (CK0058) and teacherage (CK0012). The one-story, Colonial-Revival school was built in 1924. Constructed of common bond brick, the building features a steep, hipped roof covered with slate tiles and a molded wood cornice; two slightly projecting hipped roof wings flank the main school block. A small bell tower consisting of a molded wood base and cornice with circle-top arched openings and a flared pyramidal slate roof is located atop the center roof ridge. A one-story, one-bay, pedimented porch with full entablature, supported by Tuscan columns marks the central double-leaf entrance with a 10-light transom.

One of the fascinating legacies of the history of education in Currituck County are the teacherage buildings funded by Knapp, to house the single women school teachers. Of the three teacherages, built by Knapp, the Currituck Teacherage, located next door to the junior high school, is the sole surviving building. Built in 1923, in the Colonial Revival style, the two-and-a-half-story, five bay building with a slightly flared side-gable roof was sheathed covered with weatherboard, and

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is notable for its two-story porch supported by oversized square columns, another nod to Knapp's fascination with Mount Vernon. The most decorative element on the exterior is a heavily stylized Colonial Revival entrance with molded wood sunburst lunette, topped by a molded pediment with modillions, cornice returns, and square columned pilasters with raised wood ornament near the top.

The Knotts Island Elementary (CK0204) School is one of the few high-style examples of Colonial Revival architecture seen in Currituck County. The H-shaped building, constructed in 1925 with money donated by Joseph P. Knapp, was constructed of brick laid in 7:1 common bond with the single row consisting of Flemish bond brick. The hipped roof is covered with slate shingles; a bell tower with a conical copper roof, finial, and octagonal base houses the original school bell. Other Colonial Revival details are found in the projecting front-gable pedimented pent roof portico with full entablature supported by paired columns. The double-leaf wood entrance doors have raised panels with a six-light fixed window topped by a five-light transom. The interior of the original school still retains a good deal of its building fabric including the oversized and shaped wood rafters and king posts which are said to resemble those used in J.P. Knapp's hunting lodge on Mackey's Island.

**Study List Properties**

Grandy School (CK0040) (NR)

Jarvisburg School (CK0055) (NR)

Coinjock Colored School (CK0165)

J.P. Knapp High School (CK0058) and Teacherage (CK0012)

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**C. Government**

**Description**

Government buildings are often the crown jewels of rural counties. Because of its sparsely settled nature, Currituck County has relatively few government buildings, but they include a number of distinctive vernacular structures that exhibit an enduring and rigid adherence to the Colonial Revival style as well as a few picturesque designs too.

The county's most significant building is the Currituck County Courthouse and Jail (CK0096) located in the village of Currituck. The older of the two buildings is the jail, a small, one-story brick building with a side-gable roof with strong Jacobean influences. Believed to have been built around 1820, the jail's thick walls are common bond that is 3:1, with an occasional 4:1 pattern. Jacobean influences are evident in the brick corbel cornice and the parapetted, pedimented gable ends with corner buttresses and brick coping. The window openings have granite lintels and sills with the exception of the first floor openings that were modified with concrete sills.

Dating from approximately 1869, the courthouse was built in three stages. Its original two-story brick core is three bays wide with slightly recessed, flanking wings and a granite foundation. In 1897, a second-story and a hipped roof with a molded brick cornice, brick modillions, and granite frieze were added. Articulating the slightly projecting central block is a pedimented roof with molded wood cornice which articulates the slightly projecting central block. A brick stringcourse delineates the first and second stories. The 9/9 sash windows have granite lintels on the first story and segmental brick arches on the second story; all the windows have granite sills. A one-story, three-bay brick portico with segmental arched openings and granite keystone mark the double-leaf paneled entrance doors with a multi-paned art-glass transom. In 1952, a Colonial-Revival styled rear addition was built.

One interesting aspect of the county was its numerous post offices. Each community, no matter how small at one time had its own post office; at one time approximately 30 post offices were

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taking care of the county's mail needs. Of that number, fourteen are still in operation, though all have moved to newer buildings. Some of the post offices were situated in community stores; others tended to be small, one-room frame buildings. One such example is the former Currituck Post Office (CK0168). Built sometime around 1950, the small, one-story, one-bay, two-room-deep building is clad in asbestos shingle and has a front-gable roof with exposed rafter tails. A Craftsman-styled paneled door with three vertical lights marks the off-center entrance. Shawboro's former post office (CK0267), built in 1945, is a one-story, three-bay, frame building with a front-gable roof with a large overhang which shelters the central entrance.

Built by E.R. Johnson, a local merchant, the former Currituck County Social Services Building (CK0051), is a small, frame, one-story, three-bay-wide building originally sited across the street from the County Courthouse, but later moved to a private property. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal and has exposed rafter tails. Window openings consist of 2/2 wood sash with simple wood surrounds and sills; located in the southeast corner of the south wall is a four raised panel single-leaf door. The interior is typical of many of Currituck buildings in its beaded board walls and ceilings, yet the ceiling is notable for its tray-design, similar to that of the Coinjock Baptist Church and the former Coinjock Home Demonstration Club.

A reminder of the vast highway construction project in the county during the 1920s is a small, one-story, frame and weatherboard building now used as a barbershop (CK0159). Originally an administrative building for a state road construction project, this sturdily built Colonial Revival-styled building is covered with weatherboard; cornerboards articulate the walls of the building. A front-gable roof has exposed rafter tails and a rear concrete block flue. Square columns support the hipped roof porch. The building is quite possibly based on a standardized state plan for structures of this type.

In the village of Coinjock there is a distinctive building that formally served as a lighthouse keeper's dwelling (CK0185) for the United States Government at Long Point, North Carolina. Little information exists about the early history of the building. What is known is that in 1879, the United

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States Coast Guard established, Long Point Beacon Light (No. 8). In 1901, the site was retired and the building moved to Coinjock.<sup>9</sup>

Like the Colonial Revival-styled buildings used by the United States Army to build its stately forts, the use of the Gothic Revival style by the federal government for its lighthouse stations and related buildings, created a striking and memorable style combining rural picturesque elements through the use of modern mass-production. Built sometime during the period 1879-1880, the prefabricated two-story, seven bay frame house was assembled on location. By articulating each story with different materials, the building's otherwise stern and formal plan is toned down a bit. The first story is covered with novelty siding, and has cornerboards and a molded exterior baseboard. Sawtooth batten siding mark the second story. The side-gable roof has exposed rafters on the north and south slopes; almost obscuring the circular wood louvered vents in the gable ends are decorative bargeboards with beaded board and pierced block trim.

**Significance**

Churches, schools and government buildings were vital to the growth and development of both Currituck's communities and the county as a whole. Some of these buildings reflect architectural trends and styles seen throughout the state, the region and the nation. Therefore, commercial buildings may be eligible under the National Register's Criterion A as representing Currituck County's community, commercial and transportation growth and/or under Criterion C in that some buildings are representative or exceptional examples of local educational, government, or religious architecture.

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<sup>9</sup> "Long Point Beacon Light (No. 8)," <http://www.uscg.mil/history/weblighouses/LHNC.asp>

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**Registration Requirements**

To be eligible for the National Register, an institutional property in Currituck County must be fifty years or older and retain integrity of location, setting, materials, design and workmanship. Commercial buildings may be eligible for listing under Criterion A for their association with the county's educational, governmental, or religious development or under Criterion C, for their architectural merit. These buildings should retain their original interior and exterior features and their integrity of setting, association and workmanship. Under ordinary circumstances, structures that have been moved from their original locations shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, in the case where a building was moved in order to save it from destruction as in the case of highway widening, special considerations under Criteria Consideration B, in which a building or structure was removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value should be taken into consideration. The addition of brick veneer or vinyl siding on top of original materials should not automatically exclude the building from consideration, but its impact should be evaluated on an individual basis. If the application of brick veneer occurred more than fifty years ago as part of a larger remodeling, the changes altogether may be considered as part of the building's architectural significance under Criterion C. Buildings significant under Criterion A and B that have been vinyl-sided may be eligible as long as the majority of other identifying features remain intact.

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**Property Type 4: Commercial Buildings**

Next to community post offices, commercial buildings abounded throughout Currituck County. With the exception of a “Main Street” business district in Moyock, the majority of stores were scattered throughout the small villages and rural areas of the county. According to many residents, it was not uncommon to find not only one store, but to find two or three stores marking the main intersecting crossroads of a community. To stay in business, these commercial undertakings might have a “specialty,” in addition to offering basic food staples and supplies. For instance, at one store, a customer could order shoes, while at another, certain types of equipment. Small stores located near the water catered to hunters and fishermen. The majority of these stores were small, one-story, frame buildings sometimes with false parapet fronts. Many owners built their stores on the same piece of land where their house was sited. These late-nineteenth-century rural commercial buildings drew on a variety of architectural inspirations of which Italianate and Queen Anne elements were the most popular.

Three turn-of-the-century stores still stand in the county, two in Moyock, both owned by the Poyner family, and one in Currituck village. Formerly a prominent store within the Moyock Village, the deteriorating one-and-a-half-story, three bay wide, Poyner Store #1 (CK0073) was built in 1895. Settled near the railroad tracks, this front-gable frame building is covered with the original lap and weatherboard siding and single corner boards. Remnants of the roof’s cornice returns remain. On the first story of the south-facing gable end, there are two 2/2 double hung sash windows with a loft-type opening directly above the central entrance. Across the street, the Poyner Store #2 (CK0074), the railroad tracks. The two-story, three bay frame and beaded weatherboard building was built in 1903, and is only one of two surviving historic two-story commercial buildings in the county. The flat roof is partially obscured by the stepped and arched parapet on the façade, the building’s most notable aspect. Other roof details include heavily molded cornices and eave brackets and a pierced wood frieze. A hipped roof porch supported by turned wood posts shelters the central recessed entrance

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door. And the flanking large four-light fixed windows. The store retains its original 2/2 wood sash windows with molded wood drip hoods and surrounds. One unique detail of the store are the three small diamond-shaped windows on the north and south first floor area walls.

In the village of Currituck the former E.R. Johnson-Snowden General Store (CK0084), constructed c. 1897, is the other largely intact example of the false-front parapeted storefront. This one-story building has two recessed entrances marked by double-leaf doors and large four-light display windows flanking them. Beneath the windows are molded wood panels with a small inset covered in diagonal board sheathing. The interior also remains comparatively unchanged, with many of the original shelves, featuring bracketed cornices with its zigzag sawn ornament and the counters with paneled and bracketed bases and diagonal beaded board countertops.

By the beginning of the twentieth-century, the role of the store had changed little in the county. As far as architectural styles, commercial buildings of the early twentieth-century tended to be simpler in style and ornament. Gone were the Italianate and Queen Anne stylings. These buildings tended to be one or two-stories in height, wood frame and siding with a front-gable roof.

A good example of an early twentieth-century front-gable commercial building is found at Coinjock's B.C. Kinsey Store (CK0097), located at the southern end of Worth Guard Road directly north of the canal. Built in 1925 on the site of an earlier store, the two-and-a-half-story building is covered with its original beaded weatherboard siding. The Kinsey Store with its relatively steep front gable façade emphasizes the building's verticality, with its overhanging eaves and three-piece wood brackets. The Munden Store (CK0194) on Knotts Island is a one-and-a-half-story, five-bay front-gable store. Although not as large as its mainland counterparts, the store maintains its six-inch wide German siding and the single cornerboards delineating the building's corners. The recessed central entrance is aligned with the apex of the gable, and consists of a single-leaf wood paneled door. Located roughly northeast of the Edmund Gallop property is a one-and-a-half-story frame building that has served as a commercial, social, and agricultural structure for the community of Harbinger. The Gallop Store (CK0131) is covered with board-and-batten siding with a front-gable

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roof. Located in the in the front gable end is a small loft opening that has been boarded up; marking the entrance is an oversized shed-roof hood supported by heavy wood braces. The 2/2 wood sash openings are pegged; the central entrance consists of double-leaf vertical-board doors.

With the coming of the automobile and better roads during the first decades of the twentieth-century, a few gasoline stations/stores appeared throughout the county. These commercial buildings served a dual purpose, not only offering groceries and supplies, but also selling gasoline, oil, tires and other auto supplies. Some of these businesses also offered auto repair. Surviving examples are what have been called "domestic" or "house and canopy" gas stations. The style was developed in 1916 by Standard Oil of Ohio and consisted of a small house-like building with an attached canopy which protected the gas pumps and the customer from the weather. The style was meant to evoke feelings of home and comfort in travelers and, in turn, to make people more at ease buying goods from the station. In some instances, a small dwelling was attached to the building; in others a separate residence, usually an older residence stood nearby.

Two good examples of Depression-era stores and gas stations that once dotted Highway 168 are the H. Etheridge-Dzwonek Gas Station and Store (CK0134) in Spot and the C.W Wright Store (CK0315) in Jarvisburg. The former, a one-story gas station and general store was built sometime around 1930. A photograph taken in 1954 shows the building was originally clad in weatherboard with a hipped roof and exposed rafter tails and nine-light commercial windows that flanked the central entrance door. The interior of the one-room store is relatively intact; the original shelves and one original counter remain, as do the cash registers. The C. W. Wright Store (CK0315), is part of a small complex of buildings owned by the Wright family. The one-story, four bay, frame and weatherboard commercial building has a front-gable roof. A modified hipped roof porch with boxed rafter tails, supported by square wood posts, marks the rather unique roofline, somewhat reminiscent of the H. Etheridge-Dwzonek Store in Spot. The interior of the store remains unchanged. The large main room and small office area, located in the front southeast corner are covered with beaded board. Simple wood shelving lines the north and rear west walls with the original glass and wood paneled counters lined in front.

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**National Register Study List Properties**

C. W. Wright Store (CK0315)

**Significance**

As bustling centers of commerce and trade and as gathering places, commercial buildings were vital to the economic and social life of Currituck County. Commercial buildings also symbolized the expansion of small downtown business districts as seen in the villages of Moyock and Currituck. With the growth of various transportation industries such as the railroad and the emergence of the automobile also signaled an important development of commercial architecture in the county. Some of these buildings reflect architectural trends and styles seen throughout the state, the region and the nation. Therefore, commercial buildings may be eligible under National Register Criterion A as representing Currituck County's community, commercial and transportation growth and/or under Criterion C in that some buildings are representative or exceptional examples of local commercial architecture and construction.

**Registration Requirements**

To be eligible for the National Register, a commercial property in Currituck County must be fifty years or older and retain integrity of location, setting, materials, design and workmanship, feeling and association. These buildings should retain their original interior and exterior features. Under ordinary circumstance, structures that have been moved from their original locations shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, in the case of a building, significant primarily for architectural value, was moved in order to save it from destruction as in the case of highway widening, the buildings would be eligible under Criteria B if its retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship and its orientations and setting are similar to that of the original site.

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**Property Type 5: Recreational Buildings**

**A. Hunting Lodges**

**Description**

Some of the most distinctive architecture found in Currituck County is found in its many hunt clubs. From the mid-nineteenth century through the 1950s and later, Currituck Sound was a sportsman's paradise drawing hunters, particularly from the Northeast. Many of these men were wealthy captains-of-industry, having made their fortunes in everything from publishing to iron and steel. By the late nineteenth century, a number of private hunting and shooting clubs had been established from the Currituck Mainland to Knotts Island and the Outer Banks. The prevailing architectural styles range from a kind of vernacular interpretation of the late nineteenth century Shingle Style to the Colonial Revival style, a design that proved immensely popular throughout the county in all of its building types.

The Shingle Style design, which rose to prominence following the 1876 Centennial, celebrated early American Colonial houses of the Northeast with their plain, shingled surfaces as well as their massing. Architectural historian Vincent Scully's description of the Shingle Style seems particularly apt in discussing the hunt club architecture of Currituck County:

[The style] can have a wonderful darkness in it, a rough animal presence and something wild of the mountains and the sea. Yet it is in the end an architecture of suburban relaxation and country joys. It reflects an American middle class grown rich after the Civil War, prepared to enjoy itself, and, despite the nostalgic yearning toward Colonial simplicity and a smaller, cleaner America which helped give the style birth.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert A. M. Stern, ed. *The Architecture of the American Summer, The Flowering of the Shingle Style*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989.p. 3.

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The design was also notable for its lack of decorative elements on the exterior which might include cornerboards, fancy cornices, gingerbread porch elements or any other extraneous decoration found in doors or windows. If anything, one of the most striking elements of the Shingle Style was its very uniformity, with the exterior shingles serving as a kind of tightly-wrapped “skin” for the building.<sup>11</sup>

The Shingle Style remained in vogue from roughly 1880 until 1900 and was largely centered as the reigning style for the seaside “cottages” of the wealthy families in the Northeast. The Stick Style never caught on as dramatically with the rest of the country in the way that the other architectural styles would. However, here and there vernacular interpretations of the Shingle Style would emerge particularly in areas along the Atlantic shore, including North Carolina. Given the wealthy and prestigious backgrounds of the men who came to Currituck County to hunt, it is entirely reasonable to suggest that the Shingle Style provided some inspiration in the design and construction of a few hunting lodges in the area.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps one example of a very simple vernacular interpretation of the Shingle Style in the county is seen in the current complex of buildings at the Swan Island Club, constructed during the years 1913-1914. The property remains among Currituck County’s most intact grouping of hunt club buildings, consisting of five frame and shingle-covered buildings. The main clubhouse, a two-story, five bay, square-shaped building, has a hipped roof and four brick chimneys; the roof is topped by a large glass-enclosed cupola with a hipped roof. The complex also includes a two-story, side-gable roof building which may have stored decoys and equipment, a two-story, three bay, side-gable roof building, known as the “long house,” for its long and narrow shape, which housed the guides, a duck house, used to keep live decoys, and a small one-bay boat house.

Encircled by a cypress picket fence, is the Dews Island Hunt Club, built in 1923, for J.W. Barom and Raymond Peel. Renovated in 1929, the modest-looking two-story frame building with cedar shingle siding and a central entrance is marked by a one-story, one bay, slightly projecting

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<sup>11</sup> Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style Today*, New York: George Braziller, 1974, pp. 12-20.

<sup>12</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, pp. 288-290.

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front-gable enclosed porch. The hipped roof has a boxed cornice with a blind front-gable dormer on the west slope. On the east side wall of the house is an engaged brick exterior chimney with a single shoulder; an engaged brick flue pierces the rear south slope edge. The asymmetrical fenestration on the façade consists of replacement 1/1 sash windows. The interior consists of eighteen rooms including the large formal reception hall, dining room, living room and kitchen on the first floor and bedrooms and baths on the second.

Located on the east side of busy Woodleigh Road on Knotts Island are two stone gate posts bordered by woods and a vineyard. Each post is marked by a marble plaque bearing the words "Currituck Gunning and Fishing Club," (CK0198) one of Currituck County's most significant hunting lodges. A long gravel drive that curves gently near the waters of Currituck Sound leads to its beautifully landscaped grounds and buildings, situated on one of the higher pieces of ground on the island. The two-story, five bay, frame and cedar shingle building, was constructed in 1905 on the same site where an earlier lodge once stood. The hipped roof has a molded wood boxed cornice and simple frieze; three brick chimneys with corbelled caps are seen on the south roof ridge and on the rear west slope. Marking the dwelling's central entrance is a two-story slightly projecting front-gable roof block with wide overhanging eaves and a large lunette window in the gable end. The central single-leaf wood paneled door has an unusual graduated wood surround with two sidelights that give the entrance a slightly art deco look. Attached to the north wall of the dwelling is a small one-story breezeway that leads to a c. 1884, one-and-a-half story frame and shingle wing that once housed the caretakers. This building was moved to the property from the Outer Banks. The gambrel roof has a single interior brick chimney with a corbelled cap; three front-gable dormers with 6/6 wood sash windows are seen on the east front slope. On the interior, the first floor features a free-flowing plan with rooms loosely arranged around an open hall and a quarter-turn staircase with a paneled newel post and turned wood balustrade.

The Grover Cleveland Sawyer Lodge (CK0135) in Spot, stands as an example of a local Currituck hunting lodge that served as both a full-time residence and a part-time lodging house

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during the hunting season. The lodge, constructed in 1928, is a simple and modestly eclectic building with both Craftsmen and Colonial Revival elements. Standing two-stories high, the wood frame building was sheathed with weatherboard and later, wood shingles. The roof has shaped rafter tails with two interior brick corbeled chimney flues. The west wall of the house has two single-leaf wood four-paneled entrance doors located at the northwest and southwest corners; simple wood steps led to each entrance. Craftsmen-styled paired and triple wood square columns resting on brick piers supported the hipped roof porch.

Stirred by memories of trips to English estates and of his own English ancestry led New York newspaper publisher Ogden Reid to build his hunting sanctuary, the 350-acre compound known as The Flyway (CK0300), on Knotts Island. The original lodge house was built in 1920; unlike the popular Shingle style favored by most hunting clubs or the decided Colonial Revival influences of Joseph P. Knapp's hunting estate, the Reid's house was designed more as a Jacobean Revival residence. The original house burned in 1959 and was rebuilt the following year, almost an exact replica of the original. Even though devoid of shingle coverings, the massing of the English-influenced house and nearby "Farm Building" display more characteristics of the Shingle Style than anywhere else in the county.

The main house consists of a large, two-and-a-half-story, frame and weatherboard, asymmetrical block. The gambrel roofline is covered with slate shingles, has gable-front roof dormers and two large Jacobean-styled chimneys. Heavily carved wood pendant drops are attached to the underside of the rear second-story overhang. The interior first floor is marked by a large open massing of rooms. The Great Room, with large dark wood ceiling posts and wood floor is dominated by a large stone fireplace which commands the focal point of the room.

By far, one of the most striking and distinctive buildings in Currituck County is Reid's "Farm Building" for his hunting estate. Built during the period 1928 to 1930, the building is unique both as hunt club architecture in Currituck, as well as a high-style example of a domestic outbuilding. The building's construction is also English-influenced and was possibly designed by New York architect

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Lafayette Goldstone. The two-story, U-shaped frame and brick building housed everything from the servants to carriages, cars and farm animals, to the estate are heating system. Except for the central gable-roofed garage block, each unit is gambrel-roofed and the front and back of all roofs are pierced by numerous gabled inset dormers, each with a 6/6 wood sash windows. Located on the top of the roof ridge are circular wood and metal ventilators that provided fresh air to the building residents; three interior brick flue chimneys with corbelled caps and square ceramic chimney pots are found within each block of the building. Still adorning one of the chimneys is a metal silhouette of a hunter with his gun. Window openings throughout the building consist of single and paired 6/6 wood sash. The first floor of the west main block is dominated by the garage and equipment storage area, marked by four sets of segmental arched, double-leaf wood garage doors, each door with 8 lights. Topping each set of doors is a stylized "sunburst" panel. Flanking each side of these doors is another double-leaf wood set of garage doors, partially obscured by a segmental shaped porch roof.

Servants employed by the Reid family lived on the second floor of the west and north wings of the building. Interior details of the living quarters include plaster walls and heart pine flooring. The main entrance door, a wood, single-leaf paneled door flanked by narrow 4/4 windows is located at the far northwest corner of the west block. A quarter-turn flight of stairs leads to large landing. On either side of a long hall, were sixteen rooms of varying sizes that each housed anywhere from 3 to 4 people, or a small family to one or two persons. While not spacious, each room featured a four-paneled, single-leaf entrance door, plaster walls, a molded baseboard, at least one small closet area to hang clothing and at least one window. Two bathrooms, a kitchen and a small dining room completed the living quarters.

**Study List Properties**

- CK0198 Currituck Gunning and Fishing Club
- CK0332 Swan Island Hunt Club
- CK0300 Flyway Farm Building

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**Significance**

The role of hunt clubs cannot be emphasized enough in Currituck County history. Not only did the clubs provide an economic boost to the county through the employment of local residents as guides, hired hands, cooks, guards and the like; the presence of the clubs and their members opened up even further the horizons of the county, making it less isolated and more accessible to others. The economic impact of the hunt clubs was also significant in helping the county establish itself as a tourism and recreation spot. The architecture of many of the lodges owned by private hunt clubs offered its members luxurious surroundings while enjoying hunting activities. While not exactly resorts, the hunt clubs had a distinctive compound setting, with each building constructed for a specific function. The use of wood shingles for exterior sheathing in particular, instilled a rustic aesthetic while also drawing on prevailing architectural tastes of the many Northerners who organized the clubs.

**Registration Requirements**

To be eligible for the National Register, a recreational property in Currituck County must be associated with hunting, be fifty years or older, and retain integrity of location, setting, materials, design and workmanship. These buildings may be eligible for listing under Criterion A for their association with recreation with the county's rural commercial and economic development, or under Criterion C for their architectural merit. These buildings should retain their original interior and exterior features, and their integrity of location and setting, association, design and workmanship.

**Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

In 2004, the Currituck County Board of Commissioners appropriated funds for conducting and preparing an architectural survey of the historic resources in Currituck County, to include the county seat of Currituck and the mainland only. In addition, several islands in the Currituck Sound with known historic resources, including Knotts Island, Monkey Island and Swan Island would be

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surveyed. The architectural survey would be used to support county planning efforts as well as laying the groundwork for future National Register nomination efforts. The survey would also be the basis of a manuscript for a future book on the historic architecture of the county. A local committee including Rodney Sawyer, County Extension Director for Currituck County and county historian Barbara Snowden chose Meg Greene Malvasi, an architectural historian from Midlothian, Virginia to carry out the survey. Supervising the project at the state level were Scott Power and Claudia Brown.

The Currituck County survey is noteworthy also in that it marked a transition in architectural survey methods for the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. Information gathered during field work was entered into a new database created by Michael Southern, Senior Architectural Historian for the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. Instead of traditional black and white photography, digital photographs were used. Hard copies of each file including contact sheets containing approximately 4-6 photographs will be placed in labeled envelopes provided by the HPO. In addition, traditional mapping was replaced by the use of GIS, working in conjunction with Harry Lee, GIS coordinator for Currituck County.

In preparation for this survey, the consultant conducted a review of the primary and secondary resources of county history located at the Currituck County Library, the State Archives, and the State Library. In 2005 Marshall Dunlap and Juliana Strieff of the School of Architecture at North Carolina State University completed a windshield survey documenting approximately 370 of Currituck County's historic resources. In addition, this survey contained preliminary background research on the majority of the buildings surveyed. The Dunlap-Strieff survey was used as an initial foundation for this survey effort. The surveyor understands that the survey is by no means definitive; however, the survey's true value lies in its broad overview that has provided the surveyor with an overall understanding of Currituck County's architectural resources and their locations. In addition, files of previously documented properties recorded during the 1970s and 1980s in the county were consulted, as were various DOT reports in order to gain a better sense of approximately how many

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buildings are to be included in the current survey. In addition, the consultant traveled every public and when possible, every private road in the county to assess existing historic resources.

The fieldwork was conducted during a period beginning in the summer of 2006 and concluding in the fall of 2007. The survey was conducted according to the Department of Cultural Resources, Office of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office standards and guidelines. During that period, approximately 325 sites, and structures including dwellings, farm complexes, outbuildings, churches, schools, bridges, commercial buildings and hunting lodges were documented with written descriptions, photographs, and oral histories when available. The overall integrity of the house and property determined the level of field recording. For properties that exhibited a high level of structural integrity, a more detailed description was done. Houses that had been heavily altered were recorded, though the level of documentation was not as intense. Every effort was made to contact property owners for information about properties. When possible, the surveyor sought access to the interiors of properties in order to document interior plans, elements, or ornamentation that is noteworthy. Other types of historical research were also done including deed research when possible and a review of available literature including books, magazine articles and primary documents relating to the county's history. Information on these resources is contained in individual files compiled by the consultant and submitted to the Department of Cultural Resources, Office of Archives and History.

The survey and inventory of Currituck County's historic resources was designed to encourage Currituck County residents to preserve historic and representative examples of their architectural legacy. An increased awareness of Currituck's building history and the importance of historic preservation will go far in future efforts to protect and safeguard the county's historic buildings.

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