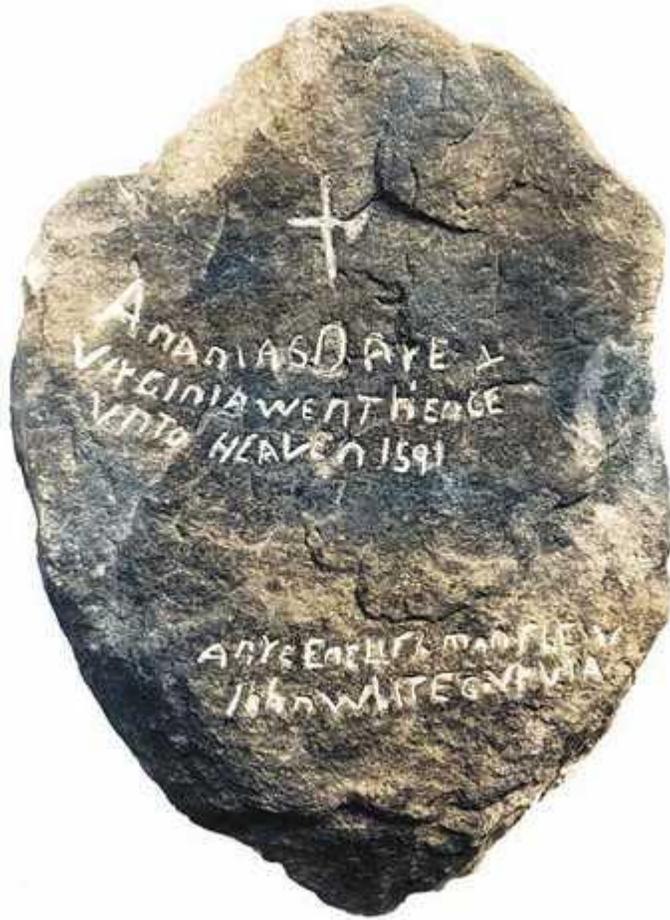


Eleanor Dare Stone



Found in 1938
On Rocky Hock Creek
4 miles north of Edenton North Carolina
Reporting to be a letter from
Eleanor Dare to her^r father John White 1591

A Search for the Original Location of the Eleanor Dare Stone

I. INTRODUCTION

Fredrick Lawson Willard and associates of the Lost Colony Center for Science & Research believe they have located the site on which Louis Hammond found the Eleanor Dare Stone. The stone, found in the summer of 1937 near Edenton, NC, appears to hold a message from Eleanor Dare to her father, John White. If authentic, this stone throws light on the fate of some of Sir Walter Raleigh's 1587 colony, popularly known as the "Lost Colony".

Hammond wrote that he found the stone three or four miles north of Edenton, about a half mile from the road, by a small bridge over water. He said he picked up the stone and carried it a short distance to the Chowan River to wash it. He described the place as marshy with a small island, and he could see a sunken barge nearby in the river. Associates from the Lost Colony Center have searched the area north of Edenton, and found only one site that meets all of the identifying elements that Hammond has described. That site is on Rocky Hock Creek Road near the bridge that crosses the creek. Although this location has previously been identified as an Indian site, which further supports this contention, this site has never previously been registered as a principle Contact-Period Indian village. The purpose of writing this paper is to document and facilitate obtaining a copyright on the discovery of the location of the Eleanor Dare Stone in 1938, and furthermore, the Lost Colony Center proffers that the capital city of the Yawpim Indians, Waratan, is this site.

The Lost Colony Center takes no position either for or against the authenticity of the Eleanor Dare Stone. However, it proposes that an examination of the place where Hammond found the stone may aid in confirming or denying its authenticity. This research paper will

explain how the likely location was found, what evidence has been uncovered in a preliminary site exploration, and how the Center intends to proceed with its investigation.

II. BACKGROUND

In the summer of 1937, Louis Hammond found a stone on the shore of the Chowan River approximately four miles from Edenton, NC. He washed it in the river and could see that there were words on it. Scratched into one side of the stone were the words: “*Ananias Dare & Virginia Went Hence Unto Heaven 1591 Anye Englishman Shew John White Govr Via.*” The writing on the reverse side was interpreted to say:

Soon after you go for England, we came here. [We have had] Only misery and war two years. About half dead before two years more from sickness, being four and twenty. Savages arrive with a message for us from a ship. A short time later they were afraid of revenge and all ran away. We believe it was not your ship. Soon afterwards the savages claim that the spirits were angry. Suddenly, they murdered all but seven. My child [Virginia] and Ananais were slain with much misery. We buried all near four miles East of this River [Chowan] upon a small hill. All their names are written on a rock. Put this there also. [If the] savages show this unto you and lead you to us, I have promised them that you will give them many presents. EWD [Eleanor White Dare.]

Hammond took the stone to Emory University, where scientists and historians at Emory examined the stone thoroughly and could not disprove its authenticity. Despite this, they were disappointed when they went back to North Carolina with Hammond, who could not determine exactly where he had found the stone. “*He said it was about a quarter of a mile away. But after wandering a mile and a half in the swamp the professors lost patience. Finally Hammond saw a barge grounded on the bank of the Chowan. A sand shoal near by, he said, was where he had washed the rock. Thereafter he “cleaned it” with a steel brush, used an indelible lead pencil to*

intensify the lettering."¹ When Emory scientists would not participate in the purchase of the stone, History Professor Dr. Haywood Jefferson Pearce, Jr. and his father, who was President of Breneau College, purchased the stone and moved it to Breneau. Because the stone message suggested that "*all their names [of the dead colonists] are written on a rock,*" Professor Pearce offered a reward for a second stone with the suggested names.

An enterprising local counterfeiting ring collected a reward for a second stone with names and collected additional rewards for 46 other stones with fake messages. These messages suggested that Eleanor Dare and a few survivors followed a trail from North Carolina to near Atlanta, Georgia. Thirty-four scholars, headed by Dr. Samuel E. Morison, of Harvard, president of the American Antiquarian Society, journeyed to Breneau, and after two days' study pronounced that "*the preponderance of evidence points to the authenticity of the stones,*" but they made specific requests for a number of additional studies.

Rather than perform the requested additional studies, Dr. Pearce decided to widely publicize his stones by submitting an article to the Saturday Evening Post. But instead of publishing his submission, the *Post* assigned an investigative reporter to the story. The reporter concluded that the 47 messages on stones found in South Carolina and Georgia were all fake. Although there was little similarity between the Chowan stone and the others, the *Post* pronounced it a forgery as well. Later, Pearce himself uncovered the hoax involving the later stones, but he did not consider the Chowan stone to be part of the hoax.

¹ Sparkes, Boyden, "Writ on on Rocke: Has America's First Murder Mystery Been Solved?" (*The Saturday Evening Post*), April 26, 1941: 9-11, 118, 120-122; http://www.angelfire.com/ego/iammagi/dare_writ_on_rocke.htm (accessed March 15, 2013).

The stones were essentially forgotten during World War II, but in 1991 author Robert W. White took another look at the stones, and concluded they were probably authentic.² Then in 2010, David LaVere and Laurie Murphy took another look at the legend of the Eleanor Dare Stone.³ They also came to the conclusion that the stone found in Chowan County should not be declared a hoax along with the later stones.

A few years ago, a collaboration between Thomas Parramore, a North Carolina history professor at Meredith College, and the Lost Colony Center for Science & Research, Inc. resurrected an interest in the stone and brought it to NC for the first time since its discovery (unfortunately, Dr. Parramore died before this took place). The stone was put on tour at Roanoke Island and Edenton, NC, where it was first found. This caused a great deal of excitement, and a rebirth in interest of the 1938 discovery. Several documentaries since that time have been attempted. The History Channel recently contacted the Lost Colony Center with an interest in learning more about the Eleanor Dare Stone for a possible TV show, which is intending to premiere October 26, 2015.

III. SEARCHING FOR THE LOCATION

History Channel interest caused Fred Willard to take an increased interest in locating the original resting place of the stone. He enlisting the aid of Center associate, Phil McMullan, a native of the area, and began to search for the place where the stone had been found. After

² Robert W. White, *A Witness for Eleanor Dare: The Final Chapter in a 400 Year Old Mystery*, March, 1991. Out of print.

³ David La Vere and Laurie Murphy, *The Lost Rocks: The Dare Stones and the Unsolved Mystery of Sir Walter Raleigh's Lost Colony*, Burnt Mill Press, July 10, 2012.

reading all the available literature, he determined that the most important published clues to the location of the stone are:⁴

1. The stone was found approximately four miles north of Edenton, NC.
2. Hammond had just crossed a small bridge over a creek when he pulled over to gather hickory nuts and stretch his legs.
3. The stone location was a swampy place.
4. Hammond walked a short distance to the river (the Chowan) to wash the stone's messages, which were hard to read because they were covered in dirt.
5. When brought back to the original location with several university professors, Hammond had a hard time finding the exact location. However, he said he recognized
 - a. a small sand spit where he washed the stone, and was able to conclusively identify it because of
 - b. a sunken barge on it across the creek.
6. Photographs of the location were taken, and soil boring samples were obtained.
7. Hammond was traveling on Rt. 17 when the discovery was made.

The location that best meets this evidence is the Cowpen Neck Road bridge over Rocky Hock Creek. This location is approximately four miles north of Edenton and is close to the Chowan River. No other Chowan County creek meets this description. Willard and McMullan visited the location and found the sunken barge at the mouth of the creek, near where they assume Hammond washed the stone. The barge Hammond referred to is today sunken just south of the mouth of Rocky Hock Creek, not in its 1937 location. Hurricanes over the past 40 years have moved it. Conversations with local residents placed the earlier site on the Chowan River north of the creek. The area has seen extensive dredge and fill activity to accommodate a marina located on the creek. That land was swampy area in 1937, according to local residents, and

⁴ White, *A Witness for Eleanor Dare*, 1991: page 261.

much of the surrounding land is swampy now. Hickory nutshells were found in the water by the small sand spit. Of the facts accumulated above, five have been confirmed, and only the soil boring needs to be compared and completed.

One of Hammond statements, however, cannot be as easily explained: that he was traveling on Route 17 when the discovery was made. There is a Pembroke Creek crossing Highway 17 about two miles out of Edenton, and there was a small bridge there in 1937. However, that creek is about two miles from the Chowan River, much too long a walk while carrying a 20-pound stone to the river to be washed. That he was on Highway 17 when he found the stone cannot be reconciled with the other reported evidence, unless there was a desire to keep the exact location a secret. It is also possible that he gave the name of the closest highway, rather than identifying an unmarked dirt road crossing Rocky Hock Creek.

It is well-documented that splinter groups of the 1585 and 1587 colonies were very likely living in Indian villages in the Chowan area. If the stone is authentic, one might expect it to have been found in a major Indian site – the message asks that an Indian show it to John White, whose return was expected. The Lost Colony Center and the History Channel have sponsored a recent but preliminary archaeological test of the site. This has revealed a very large Indian village, with thousands of artifacts recovered over a mile-wide area. Artifacts were found on the sand spit where Hammond is believed to have washed the stone, and near where the barge was located. An evaluation of the artifacts suggests that this site is Waratan, the capital village of the Weapemeoc Confederation, shown on John White's 1585 map of Virginia.

IV. PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND PLANS

The information presented above is far from conclusive, but this research is in its early stages. A major problem with this new research is that it cannot be ascertained whether the stone

was moved from another location. Because the site was the most reasonable fit to the available evidence from Hammond, it deserved further examination.

Attempts to identify 16th-century artifacts at the test site have thus far been unsuccessful. Many English artifacts have been found, but they are from a later date. More excavations into deeper strata may produce such artifacts.

If authentic, the stone provides specific direction and distance to the most important gravesite yet to be found in North America: Virginia Dare and her father, Ananias Dare. The stone purported that they are buried four miles east of the location of Hammond's discovery, on a small hill. The desirable next step would be in depth archaeological studies at the site and a search for the Dare gravesite. This research will be expensive, and local support will be important.

The findings to-date do not yet support the authenticity of the Dare Stone. However, a prominent Golden Age Elizabethan scholar found indications in the syntax that were only used in the 16th Century. If the stone could be authenticated, it would be the only artifact ever found related directly to the Lost Colony. Heretofore the single most important discovery was the Croatan site in Buxton, NC. The Eleanor Dare Stone is the first artifact discovered that directly connects to the vanished 1587 colony.

Additional Resources:

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