

North Carolina Map Blog

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What's in a name? Lockwood Folly

Posted on [8 September 2012](#)

Few North Carolina place names are older than Lockwood Folly, and the origins of few place names are more mysterious. It appears to have made its debut as “Look Wood Folly” on the c1673 Ogilby-Moxon map, [A New Discription of Carolina...](#), the so-called First Lords Proprietors’ map. “Lockwoods Folly” is seen on the c1673-75 [A New Map of the English Plantations in America...](#), by Robert Morden and William Berry, and “Lockwood Folley” is found on the 1682 [Gascoyne map of Carolina](#), the so-called Second Lords Proprietors’ map. Lockwood Folly remains a regular, if not constant, place name on North Carolina maps from that point forward to [current times](#).



Whence came this unusual name? One story relates how a Mr. Lockwood built a boat on the river that currently bears his name. He constructed the boat with a draft that was acceptable for the depth of the river and the ocean. Unfortunately, the boat’s draft was too deep to clear the inlet, so Lockwood left it in the inlet to rot. Locals thus referred to it as Lockwood’s folly. Thus far, I have not located any factual historical basis for this story.

Another explanation relates how a Mr. Lockwood tried to establish a settlement at this site, but he either provided inadequate provisions for the endeavor, or ran afoul of the local native Americans, resulting in a failed settlement, the Lockwood Folly. This explanation dates back at least to 1734, according to a traveler’s diary published in the Georgia Historical Papers, Vol. II, page 54, quoted by James Sprunt in his [Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916](#).

Yet another explanation with some historical basis, dating to January 1778, is found in the travel journal of Ebenezer Hazard, edited by Hugh Buckner Johnston and published in the North Carolina Historical Review [Vol. 36 \(1959\), 358-381](#). Hazard wrote, “Lockwood’s Folly is a Creek which empties into the Sea: it gets its Name from one Lockwood who mistook it for Cape Fear Inlet, & lost his Vessel.” That sounds plausible, even though it appears 40+ years after the “failed settlement”

explanation, and more than 100 years after the name first appeared on a map.

In *The North Carolina Gazetteer*, author William Powell provides a fourth, and reasonably plausible derivation: "...in the seventeenth century, however, the word Folly was used in the sense of the French *folie*, 'delight', or 'favorite abode', and it formed a part of the name of English estates. Lockwoods Folly River... has been described as the second most beautiful river in North Carolina, and it may have been the 'delight' or 'favorite abode' of an early settler named Lockwood." If anyone can find evidence that Lockwood settled in this region, please inform everyone via the Leave a Reply option below the comments.

Whether a failed settlement or a "delight", the origin of Lockwood Folly obviously predates the c1673 Ogilby-Moxon map. Therefore, one could reasonably assume that Lockwood was a member of one of Hilton's exploration parties, either 1662 or late 1663, or a part of the aborted settlement of the Cape Fear region by New Englanders and Barbadians in the mid 1660s. The 1734 traveler's account mentioned above described Lockwood as a "Barbadian", but Hilton's account of his voyage from Barbados in 1663 does not mention Lockwood or any attempted settlements. If anyone has further information, please share it with us via the comment section.

References:

A Relation of a Discovery Lately Made on the Coast of Florida by William Hilton, published in London in 1664, as reprinted in *James Forte; a 17th century settlement...* by Cornelius M. Dickinson Thomas (1959).

The North Carolina Gazetteer: a dictionary of Tar Heel places by William S. Powell (1968 – I've misplaced my copy of the 2010 second edition)

Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916, 2nd edition, by James Sprunt (1916).

The Charting of Cape Fear, North Carolina, 1525 to 1800, by Ashley Baynton-Williams. (c1999)

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John Collins

on **12 September 2012 at 22:38** said:

Lockwood’s Folly is possibly named for ship captain Nicholas Lockwood.

Nicholas Lockwood was the nephew of Henry Weston, gent., who made his will in Barbados on November 11, 1674.

Nicholas Lockwood was captain of the Mary, on which Thomas Drayton, Junr. (founder of Magnolia Plantation on the Ashley River) arrived in Carolina in 1679 (ticket granted at Barbados on April 25). Lockwood had also brought immigrants from Barbados to Carolina on this ship a year previously.



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on **13 September 2012 at 00:57** said:

Hi John,

Thanks for your reply, which led me to [this 1999 newspaper article on the topic](#) by the late Brunswick County historian, Susie Carson. (The link doesn’t seem to center on the article which you’ll find up and to the left.)

[This book](#) lists trips to Carolina by Nicholas Lockwood in 1678 and 1679 which you referenced above. Still looking for something placing Lockwood in the area in 1660s or no later than 1672 that would have been the source of “Look Wood Folly” on the c1673 Ogilby-Moxon map.



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on **26 December 2012 at 14:47** said:

There is a Shute's Folly at the mouth of the Cooper River in Charleston Harbor, just east of the Battery. An effort to learn the source of that "Folly" was also fruitless; one can read about it here:

<http://goo.gl/eUsfB>



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on **22 August 2013 at 09:25** said:

Thanks so much to John Collins for alerting me to Ebenezer Hazard's travel account of January 1778 that provides yet another explanation for the origin of the Lockwood Folly name (incorporated into the blog post above). Now that past issues of the NC Historical Review are available on line, many web searches need to be repeated to find information like this.

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