

The Present State of Carolina [People and Climate] ^[1]

John Lawson was an adventurous naturalist, explorer, author, and served as Surveyor General of North Carolina from 1708 to 1711. Below, an excerpt from his 1709 work titled A New Voyage to Carolina describes -- and mostly praises -- the European and native inhabitants, weather, and natural resources of Carolina, and also details what prospective settlers should bring with them from Europe.

Planters

As for [those of our own Country](#) in Carolina, some of the Men are very laborious, and make great Improvements in their Way; but I dare hardly give 'em that Character in general. [The easy Way of living in that plentiful Country, makes a great many Planters very negligent](#), which, were they otherwise, that Colony might now have been in a far better Condition than it is, (as to Trade, and other Advantages) which an universal Industry would have led them into.

Women, Good Houswives

[The Women are the most industrious Sex in that Place](#) and, by their good Houswifry, make a great deal of Cloath of their own Cotton, Wool and Flax; some of them keeping their Families (though large) very decently appare'd, both with Linnens and Woollens, so that they have no occasion to run into the [Merchant](#) ^[2]'s Debt, or lay their Money out on Stores for Cloathing.

Natives of Carolina.

Beautiful.

Not passionate.

Good Wives

Natives are docile.

No [Prodigals](#) ^[3].

Great Age of Americans.

The [Christian Natives](#) of Carolina are a straight, clean-limb'd People; the Children being seldom or never troubled with [Rickets](#) ^[4], or those other [Distempers](#) ^[5], that the Europeans are visited [withal](#) ^[6]. 'Tis next to a Miracle, to see one of them deform'd in Body. The [Vicinity of the Sun](#) makes Impression on the Men, who labour out of doors, or use the Water. As for those Women, that do not expose themselves to the Weather, they are often very fair, and generally as well featur'd, as you will see any where, and have very brisk charming Eyes, which sets them off to Advantage. [They marry very young; some at Thirteen or Fourteen; and She that stays till Twenty, is reckon'd a stale Maid](#); which is a very [indifferent](#) ^[7] Character in that warm Country.

The Women are very fruitful; most Houses being full of Little Ones. [It has been observ'd, that Women long marry'd, and without Children, in other Places, have remov'd to Carolina, and become joyful Mothers.](#) They have very easy [Travail](#) ^[8] in [their Child-bearing, in which they are so happy, as seldom to miscarry.](#) Both Sexes are generally spare of Body, and not [Cholerick](#) ^[9], nor easily cast down at Disappointments and Losses, seldom immoderately grieving at Misfortunes, unless for the Loss of their nearest Relations and Friends, which seems to make a more than ordinary Impression upon them.

Many of the Women are very handy in Canoes, and will manage them with great [Dexterity](#) ^[10] and Skill, which they become accustomed to in this watry Country. [They are ready to help their Husbands in any servile Work, as Planting, when the Season of the Weather requires Expedition; Pride seldom banishing good Houswifery. The Girls are not bred up to the Wheel](#) and Sewing only; but the Dairy and Affairs of the House they are very well acquainted withal; so that you shall see them, whilst very young, manage their Business with a great deal of Conduct and [Alacrity](#) ^[11]. The Children of both Sexes are very docile, and learn any thing with a great deal of Ease and Method; and those that have the Advantages of Education, write good Hands, and prove good Accountants, which is most coveted, and indeed most necessary in these Parts. [The young Men are commonly of a bashful, sober Behaviour; few proving Prodigals, to consume what the Industry of their Parents has left them, but commonly improve it.](#) The marrying so young, carries a double Advantage with it, and that is, that the Parents see their Children provided for in Marriage, and the young married People are taught by their Parents, how to get their Living; for their [Admonitions](#) ^[12] make great Impressions on their Children.

I had heard (before I knew this new World) that the Natives of America were a short-liv'd People, which, by all the Observations I could ever make, proves quite [contrary](#) ^[13]; for those who are born here, and in other Colonies, live to as great Ages as any of the Europeans, the Climate being free from [Consumptions](#), which Distemper, fatal to England, they are Strangers to. And as the Country becomes more clear'd of Wood, it still becomes more healthful to the Inhabitants, and less [addicted](#) ^[14] to the [Ague](#) ^[15]; which is incident to most new Comers into America from Europe, yet not [mortal](#) ^[16]. A gentle [Emetick](#) ^[17] seldom misses of driving it away, but if it is not too troublesome, ['tis better to let the Seasoning have its own Course](#), in which case, the Party is commonly free from it ever after, and very healthful.

Collections.

Provisions very cheap.

Indians Hunters.

And now, as to the other Advantages the Country affords, we cannot guess at them at present, because, as I said before, the best Part of this Country is not inhabited by the English, from whence probably will here after spring Productions that this Age does not dream of, and of much more Advantage to the Inhabitants than any things we are yet acquainted withal: And as for several Productions of other Countries, much in the same Latitude, we may expect, with good Management, they will become familiar to us, as Wine, Oil, Fruit, Silk, and other profitable Commodities ^[18], such as Drugs, Dyes, &c. And at present the Curious may have a large Field to satisfy and divert themselves in, as Collections of strange Beasts, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, Shells, Fishes, Minerals, Herbs, Flowers, Plants, Shrubs, intricate Roots, Gums ^[19], Tears ^[20], Rozins ^[21], Dyes, and Stones, with several other that yield Satisfaction and Profit to those, whose Inclinations tend that Way.

And as for what may be hop'd for, towards a happy Life and Being, by such as design to remove hither ^[22], I shall add this; That with prudent Management, I can affirm, by Experience, not by Hear-say ^[23], That any Person, with a small Beginning, may live very comfortably, and not only provide for the Necessaries of Life, but likewise for those that are to succeed him; Provisions being very plentiful, and of good Variety, to accommodate ^[24] genteel ^[25] House-keeping; and the neighbouring Indians are friendly, and in many Cases serviceable to us, in making us Weirs to catch Fish in, for a small matter, which proves of great Advantage to large Families, because those Engines take great Quantities of many Sorts of Fish, that are very good and nourishingrd: Some of them hunt and fowl for us at reasonable Rates, the Country being as plentifully provided with all Sorts of Game, as any Part of America; the poorer Sort of Planters often get them to plant for them, by hiring them for that Season, or for so much Work, which commonly comes very reasonable. Moreover, it is remarkable, That no Place on the Continent of America, has seated an English Colony so free from Bloodshed, as Carolina; but all the others have been more damag'd and disturb'd by the Indians, than they have; which is worthy Notice, when we consider how oddly it was first planted with Inhabitants.

Fishing-Trade.

Whale-Fishing.

Indian-Trade.

The Fishing-Trade in Carolina might be carried on to great Advantage considering how many Sorts of excellent Fish our Sound and Rivers afford, which cure very well with Salt, as has been experienced by some small Quantities, which have been sent abroad, and yielded a good Price. As for the Whale-fishing, it is no otherwise regarded than by a few People who live on the Sand-Banks; and those only work on dead Fish cast on shoar, none being struck on our Coast, as they are to the Northward; altho' we have Plenty of Whales there.

Great Plenty is generally the Ruin of Industry. Thus our Merchants are not many, nor have those few there be, apply'd themselves to the European Trade. The Planter sits contented at home, whilst his Oxen thrive and grow fat, and his Stocks daily increase; The fatted Porkets and Poultry are easily rais'd to his Table, and his Orchard affords him Liquor, so that he eats, and drinks away the Cares of the World, and desires no greater Happiness, than that which he daily enjoys. Whereas, not only the European, but also the Indian-Trade, might be carried on to a great Profit, because we lie as fairly for the Body of Indians, as any Settlement in English-America; And for the small Trade that has been carried on in that Way, the Dealers therein have throve as fast as any Men, and the soonest rais'd themselves of any People I have known in Carolina.

Climate.

Summer.

No Earthquakes.

Serene.

Spring. Fall.

Lastly, As to the Climate, it is very healthful our Summer is not so hot as in other places to the Eastward in the same Latitude; neither are we ever visited by Earthquakes, as many places in Italy and other Summer-Countries are. Our Northerly ^[26] Winds, in Summer, cool the Air, and free us from pestilential ^[27] Fevers, which Spain, Barbary ^[28], and the neighbouring Countries in Europe, &c. are visited withal. Our Sky is generally serene and clear, and the Air very thin, in comparison of many Parts of Europe where Consumptions and Catarrhs ^[29] reign amongst the Inhabitants.

The Winter has several Fitts of sharp Weather, especially when the Wind is at N. W. which always clears the Sky, though never so thick before. However, such Weather is very agreeable to European Bodies, and makes them healthy. The N. E. Winds blowing in Winter, bring with them thick Weather, and, in the Spring, sometimes, blight ^[30] the Fruits; but they very seldom endure long, being blown away by Westerly Winds, and then all becomes fair and clear again. Our Spring, in Carolina, is very beautiful, and the most pleasant Weather a Country can enjoy. The Fall is accompanied with cool Mornings, which come in towards the latter end of August, and so continue (most commonly) very moderate Weather till about Christmas; then Winter comes on apace ^[31].

Tho' these Seasons are very piercing, yet the Cold is of no continuance. Perhaps, you will have cold Weather for three or four days at a time; then pleasant warm Weather follows, such as you have in England, about the latter end of April or beginning of May. In the Year 1707. we had the severest Winter in Carolina, that ever was known since the English came to settle there; for our Rivers, that were not above half a Mile wide, and fresh Water, were frozen over; and some of them, in the North-part of this Country, were passable for People to walk over.

No Frontier ^[32].

Near Virginia.

Mariland.

One great Advantage of North-Carolina is, That we are not a Frontier, and near the Enemy; which proves very chargeable and

troublesome, in time of War, to those Colonies that are so seated. Another great Advantage comes from its being near Virginia, where we come often to a good Market, at the Return of the Guinea-Ships for Negro's, and the Remnant of their Stores, which is very commodious for the Indian-Trade; besides, in War-time, we lie near at hand to go under their Convoy, and to sell our Provisions to the Tobacco-fleets; for the Planting of Tobacco generally in those Colonies, prevents their being supplied with Stores, sufficient for victualling their Ships.

Necessaries for Carolina.

As for the Commodities, which are necessary to carry over to this Plantation, for Use and Merchandize, and are, therefore, requisite for those to have along with them, that intend to transport themselves thither; they are Guns, Powder and Shot, Flints [33], Linnens of all sorts, but chiefly ordinary Blues [34], Osnaburgs [35], Scotch and Irish Linnen, and some fine: Mens and Womens Cloaths ready made up, some few Broad-Cloaths [36], Kerseys [37] and Druggets [38]; to which you must add Haberdashers-Wares [39], Hats about Five or Six Shillings apiece, and a few finer; a few Wiggs, not long, and pretty thin of Hair; thin Stuffs for Women; Iron-Work, as Nails, Spades, Axes, broad and narrow Hoes, Frows [40], wedges [41], and Saws of all sorts, with other Tools for Carpenters, Joiners [42], Coopers [43], Shoemakers, Shave-locks, &c. all which, and others which are necessary for the Plantations, you may be inform'd of, and buy at very reasonable Rates, of Mr. James Gilbert, Ironmonger [44], in Mitre-Tavern-Yard, near Aldgate. You may also be used very kindly, for your Cutlery-Ware [45], and other advantageous Merchandizes, and your Cargo's well sorted, by Capt. Sharp, at the Blue gate in Cannon-street; and for Earthen-Ware, Window-Glass, Grind-Stones [46], Mill-Stones [47], Paper, Ink-Powder [48], Saddles, Bridles, and what other things you are minded to take with you, for Pleasure or Ornament.

And now, I shall proceed to the rest of the Vegetables, that are common in Carolina, in reference to the Place where I left off, which is the Natural History of that Country.

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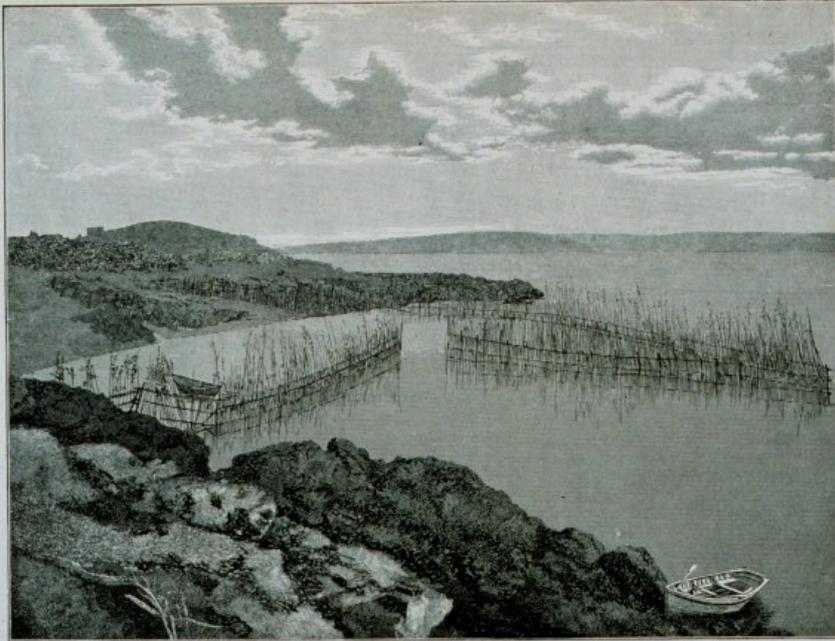
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Related Topics:



THE SARDINE INDUSTRY.

Shows herring weir near Eastport, Me.; the common form of brush weir. (Sect. v, vol. 1, p. 501.)
From a photograph by T. W. Reilly.

PLATE 121

[69]

Fishing weir

Primary Sources:

A NEW
VOYAGE
TO
CAROLINA;
CONTAINING THE
Exact Description and Natural History
OF THAT
COUNTRY:

Together with the *Present State* thereof.

AND
A JOURNAL
Of a Thousand Miles, Travel'd thro' several
Nations of *INDIANS*.
Giving a particular Account of their Customs,
Manners, &c.

By JOHN LAWSON, Gent. Surveyor-
General of *North-Carolina*.

LONDON:
Printed in the Year 1709.

[70]

A New Voyage to Carolina, 1709.

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