



TEMPERATE AIR, REQUISITE CARE

by Bland Simpson

*a “brief and true” inventory of things Caroliniana . . .
as selective as it is eclectic*

*As Harriot reported
and as many have
touted since, we
have “temperate
air . . . a salubrious
climate,” and,
almost everywhere
from one end
of the province
to the other,
a fabulous fecundity.*

BLAND SIMPSON drew this essay from the Thomas Harriot Lecture he gave in Greenville, NC, in February 2012 as part of ECU’s Voyages of Discovery lecture series sponsored by the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences. It has been updated to reflect upon certain events since that date. Bland Simpson’s numerous honors include the Governor’s Award for “Conservation Communicator of the Year,” presented by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation in 1999.

I am full of affection and deep concern for the natural and human life of coastal Carolina and, indeed, all of North Carolina. My people have been here for a while.

On my mother’s side, two of my ancestors, Dr. Godfrey Spruill and his wife, Joanna, came into this country in the 1690s, from Scotland via Virginia; they made their home where the Scuppernong River opens into Bull’s Bay and Albemarle Sound and called their farm Heart’s Delight. Another kinsman, on my father’s side, was my eight-times great-grandfather, William Drummond, the first governor of Albemarle. He called the first assembly, a group of men who met beside Hall’s Creek in southern Pasquotank County. One of the few things that came of that first session was the resolution that members would not throw their chicken bones under the tree where the meeting was being held. In a very basic, down-home way, this is a strict statement on environmental protection, and it seems to have been our first.

Governor Drummond, who served 1664 to 1667, was dismissed and recalled by the despotic Governor William Berkeley of Virginia, whom Drummond later opposed by joining forces with Nathaniel Bacon in Bacon’s short-lived rebellion against Berkeley. When warned by a friend against his involvement with Bacon, William Drummond said, “I am in over shoes, I will be in over boots.”¹ In my love and depth of concern for North Carolina, I am in over boots as well. Noting what Thomas Harriot did when he was here (even though it was Virginia then) and in his *Brief and True Report on the New Found Land of Virginia*, I too want to make a “brief and true” inventory of things Caroliniana, one that I pledge will be as selective as it is eclectic. Had we world enough and time, I would prowl over every portion and precinct of North Carolina.

¹ Quoted in Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina: With Maps and Illustrations*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Fayetteville: Hale, 1859) 446.

ABOVE LEFT **Bland Simpson, 2013**

RIGHT **The Great Dismal Swamp, 2013**