



## **The Mother Vine(yard)**

**Featuring the Essay by Dr. William C. Etheridge, University of Missouri**

(Image on many websites. Impossible to identify copyright. Please advise.)

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## **The Mother Vine(yard)**

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## Buying a Mother Vine

Adapted from *2011-09 Interlude IX, "Shore to Falls" (Southern Shores NC, with Father and Friedrun; Sapphire NC; Asheville NC)*, a diary of a trip taken on that date. Sadly, many of the pictures taken on that trip were lost and never recovered.

### Preparation

And if we were going to be at the beach, we could get a Mother Vine. Loie and I had been talking for ages about building a pergola or arbor as a complement to the front garden beds. I thought we should have grape vines growing on it: the poor old vines out back were being overshadowed by The First Christmas Tree and just didn't like it. Maybe if we got, and planted, a Mother Vine I'd be inspired to make the arbor for it.

I can't now remember how we first learned of the Roanoke Island Mother Vine. It's just one of those bits of local lore one runs across. Perhaps on our first visit to the Elizabethan Gardens, where they sell clones of it? We were off on another adventure!

...

### Day 2: Sunday, September 18, 2011—Elizabethan Gardens, Manteo

Up at about 8 AM yellow grits and Queens cake for breakfast! Breezy, no rain at the moment, wailroiling clouds, cool, but pleasant. At 8:30 some sun peeking through.

With a clearly non-beach day ahead, a perfect day to go to Manteo, the Elizabethan Gardens, & buy a Mother Vine!

Back on normal schedule, we left at 11 AM. We were also looking to buy a day pack & had 2 stores to try, one in Manteo, one in Kitty Hawk. We planned to also visit the Manteo bookstore.

...

The Elizabethan Gardens seems totally new, though we're sure

we visited them before, maybe with the Hatfields?

In the gift shop/ticket desk/entry we asked about buying a vine—yes, they had them. But they were not on the shelf outside. Ned the gardener was called on the phone, he finally came up himself & lead us to 2 plants we had overlooked. Bucky wanted a smaller plant—Ned assured us there were many more in pots in the greenhouse area. We debated buying one now or coming back later in the week—told Ned we'd be back Thursday or Friday.

But we decided to visit the garden, have lunch in Manteo, visit the bookstore, find the sports shop & come back & buy the vine.

...

On the way out, we learned the Mother Vine Road did lead to the mother vine, on private property, "you can't miss it," & got a recommendation for Full Moon Café in Manteo. As promised, finding the vine was easy as pie! In a yard right next to the road.

...

Back to the EGs, Ned summoned, and we walked back to the greenhouse area, which was quite large as promised, many vines, & B got to choose his own, one that looks very healthy. B had earlier read a sign that reminded him that the MV cannot produce grapes without a 2nd, fertilizing one. They sold Nobile grapevines for this purpose, but B said, "Let's see if this Mother Vine gets established, then we'll get a fertilizing one."

### Aftermath

Alas, it was not to be. After dragging our potted mother vine from Southern Shores, where it sat out on the screen porch, to Nancy and Marianne's b&b in Sapphire, NC, where it also sat out on a screen porch, to the Downtown Inn and Suites Asheville, NC (where we can't remember exactly what we did with it) it was

planted in the front yard.

It wasn't until April of 2013 that the arbor was built to accommodate our Mother Vine. As you can see, the poor thing wasn't doing well. We don't have any easily available notes, but it died for good a year or two later. I've always wondered if digging and working so near it hurt. But we've had other plants die here due to the cold, dry winter wind that sweeps over the hill behind the house; our dense clay-and-shale-shard soil (our yard turns into the world's biggest brick in a dry summer) can't have been the best for a sandy-soil plant such as a muscadine. All in all, a not-very-well-thought-through experiment.

A New England hardy Concord was doing pretty well as of 2019. And rampantly proliferating as of 2021.

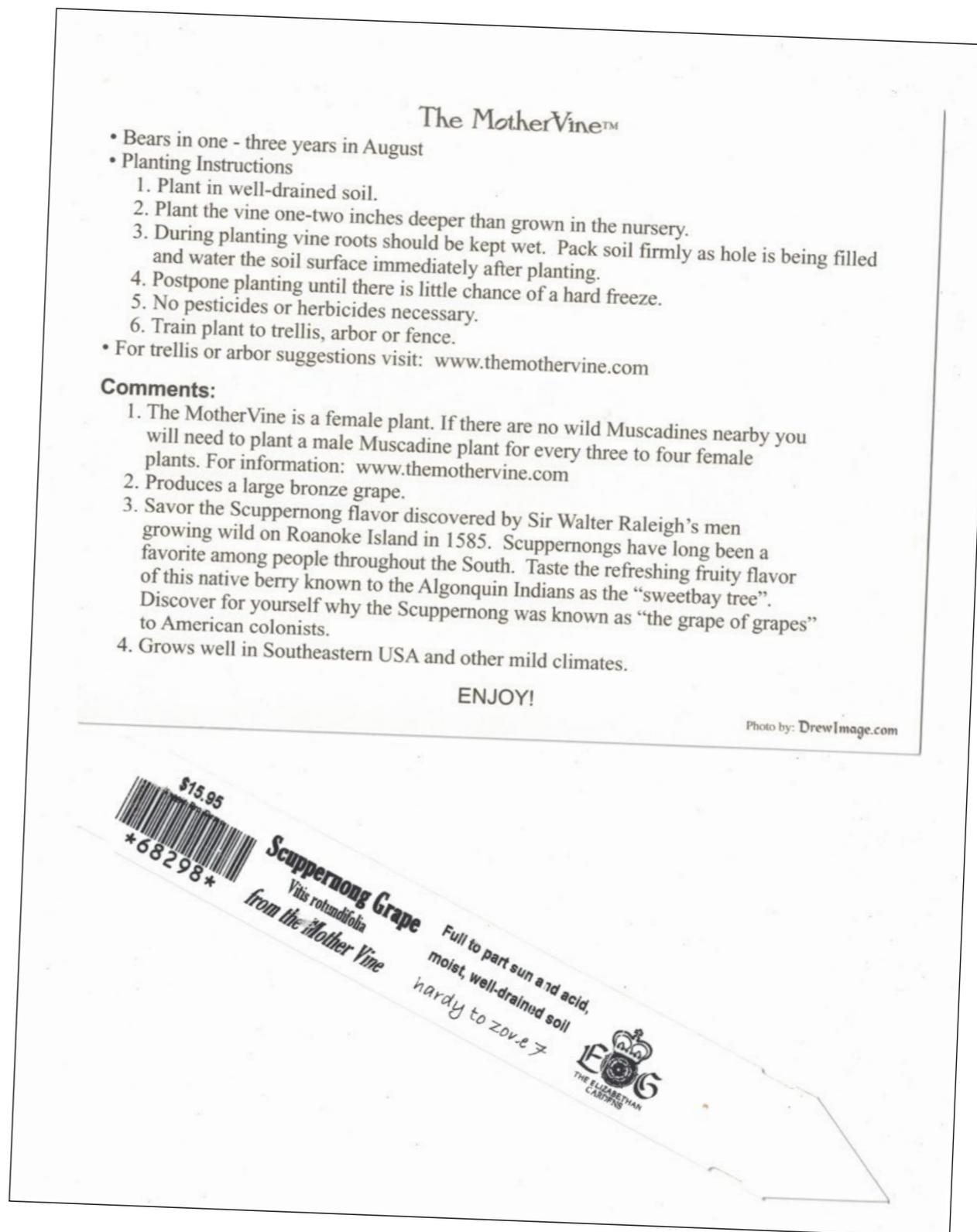


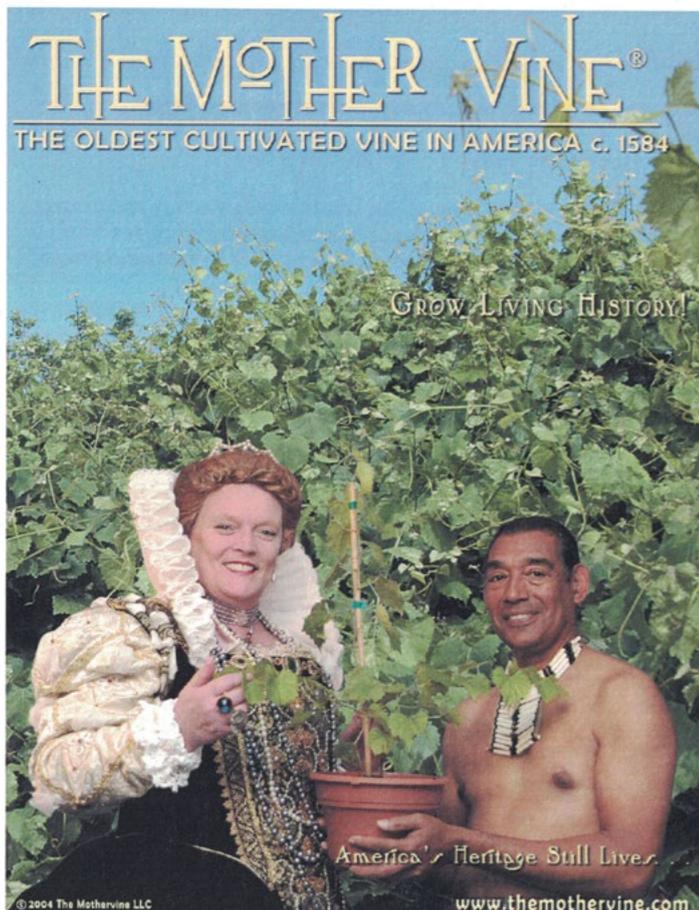
Given the instructions and descriptions on these labels we received with our vine, we should have known it was a dicey proposition for our yard.

“...moist, well-drained soil...” In dry summers, our clay&shale soil turns into the world’s biggest brick.

“...other mild climates.” We had already lost several ornamental plantings that were here when we bought the property and home. Advice given us by the Carroll County Agricultural Extension staff was that our big yard was just too cold and dry with the winter winds sweeping over it.

We’ve been planting live Christmas trees for decades, creating a Christmas Tree Windbreak on the west side of the house, but that didn’t shelter a vine by the arbor.





## THE MOTHER VINE

A Living History of the Scuppernong Grape

Welcome to the world of The Mother Vine!

For more than 400 years, the Mother Vineyard scuppernong grape vine on Roanoke Island, North Carolina has been – and still is – producing crops of succulent bronze-colored fruits.

In 1584, English explorers Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe arrived on the Island of Roanoke. Barlowe noted in his journal that, upon arriving on the Outer Banks of what is now North Carolina, he observed that “...the land was so full of grapes as the very beating and surge of the sea overflowed them.” We found such plenty, as well there, as in all places else – both on the sand and on the green soil of the hills, in the plains, on every little shrub, and also climbing toward the tops of high cedars – that, I think in all the world, the like abundance is not to be found.

With your vine, rooted from a cutting taken directly from The Mother Vine, you now own a part of America’s living history.

Indigenous to the southeastern United States, the Scuppernong is easy to plant, grow and maintain – especially in the South. Within 2 – 3 years, your vine can provide delicious and healthy fruit, shade, decorative yard and fence foliage – or a focal point to initiate discussion about the only Elizabethan colonies in what is now the United States of America.

## THE HISTORY

In 1584, Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, the first explorers sent to the New World by Sir Walter Raleigh, under the auspices of Queen Elizabeth, arrived at what is now Bodie Island. As noted earlier, one of the first things they observed was that the land was overflowing with grapes. The English naturally thought that wine was plentiful in the region. Unbeknown to them, however, the absence of deliberately fermented beverages by Native Americans in eastern North America was universal. They simply ate the grapes.

The following year, 1585, brought yet another contingent of Englishmen to Roanoke Island. They too noticed the abundance of grapes, but knew little about fermenting them. Most of the wines in England were imported. The 1585 settlers did, however, put Native American maize to good use in a make-shift brewery.

Nevertheless, the English settlers of 1585 realized the potential of the Roanoke Island grapes. When they departed the Outer Banks for England, they took along cuttings of the Scuppernong. Alas, the plants failed in the wet and cold English climate. But that was never to be so for the more temperate southern section of North America.

The story of Sir Walter Raleigh’s colonies on Roanoke Island (sans their quest for the grape) is re-told every summer, in the words of Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Paul Green, at the Waterside Theatre on Roanoke Island. The Lost Colony, the world’s first symphonic drama, like the Scuppernong grape, is a North Carolina treasure.

THE MOTHER VINE continues to thrive today, growing along Mother Vineyard Road in Manteo, North Carolina, a few paces from the Roanoke Sound. The ancient vine densely covers a wooden arbor, about 30 feet wide and 100 feet long. The main trunk of the Mother Vine is a massive gnarl of huge, aged, co-mingled vines about six or seven feet in diameter.

Is The Mother Vine that flourishes on Roanoke Island today really a remnant of the 16th century? Tough question. Without damaging the vine by boring to its center to date it, all that can be said with certainty is the vine was known to exist in the late 1700s. William C. Etheridge, a man with family ties to The Mother Vine in the 18th century, mentions the date in his pamphlet, The Mystery of Mother Vineyard, and contends it was probably planted around 1587–1589.

Whatever the date of The Mother Vine’s origin, a visitor to the site today will surely come away with a deep sense of awe and respect for history at having seen and touched one of the oldest living fruit plants on the face of the earth. The Scuppernong is the official state fruit of North Carolina.

### FOR GOOD HEALTH

Health benefits add to the allure of The Mother Vine. The Muscadine family of grapes (of which the Scuppernong is a member) has recently been shown to contain resveratrol (a reducer of heart attacks and strokes), as well as ellagic acid, a strong anti-oxidant that inhibits cancer. Muscadines contain twice the resveratrol element as the regular vinifera grape. Recent studies show resveratrol may reduce cardiac disease and reduce LDL as well as IDL (bad cholesterol). The Mother Vine offers a chance for better health.

Let us grow the vines, and lift a glass of the Scuppernong – to our health and to our history.

The Mother Vine, LLC ©2004

The Mothervine, L.L.C. is a North Carolina corporation dedicated to:  
 1. The preservation, propagation and dissemination of The Mothervine, a scuppernong plant that is over 400 years old on Roanoke Island, North Carolina.  
 2. Education the public about the exciting early history of America dating back to 1584.

All net profits will be used for charitable causes in Dare County, North Carolina (home of the Mothervine). Contact us: The Mothervine.com or by mail: The Mothervine, 1109 Greenwood Cliff, Charlotte, North Carolina 28204

## But That's Not All...

*Editor's note: The history of this project...*

When Loie and I bought our Mother Vine scion at the Elizabethan Gardens, the little booklet we received (seen on the previous pages) stating "...all that can be said with certainty is the vine was known to exist in the late 1700s. William C. Etheridge, a man with family ties to the Mother Vine in the 18th century, mentions the date in his pamphlet, 'The Mystery of Mother Vineyard,' and contends it was probably planted around 1587-1589."

The Elizabethan Gardens didn't have a copy of the Etheridge "pamphlet." At that moment, obtaining the pamphlet was established as an Important Project. How to get a copy? What did it say?

My documentation of how I obtained a copy of the "pamphlet" turns out to be sadly lacking. I did, somehow, find that UNC University Libraries had an entry for "The Mystery of Mother Vineyard" and, somehow, managed to contact Sarah Downing, then of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, the Office of Archives and History, at the Outer Banks History Center, who eventually very kindly provided me with a photocopy of a typescript/manuscript of Mr. Etheridge's pamphlet obtained from the library.

The pamphlet apparently was never published anywhere, and in this document I provide what I believe to be the only extant full copy of his "pamphlet," deposited in the UNC library in 1948, outside their Wilson Library collection.

Of course, as these little projects tend to go with me, reading Dr. Etheridge's monograph set me off and Googling. Could his claims be possible?

For several vague-ish reasons I've found his extreme antiquity idea to be a bit incredible. But the lesser claim that some of the multiple plantings that comprised the Mother Vineyard seem to be

well attested. It's darned old, one way or the other!

In the following pages, you can read about the very old history of the interest in native grapes, Dr Etheridge's monograph, and lots of—to me at least!—interesting stories about the old plantings.

I hope you will enjoy.

*Editor's note: On the following pages...*

The information I have gathered will be presented in a chronological order mostly based on the topic being discussed. In some few cases, where the topic spans a lot of time, an article may be placed more by its publication date.

## Narrative of Le Moyne, 1564

[https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl\\_15521/?sp=1&r=-0.279,0.398,1.537,0.982,0](https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_15521/?sp=1&r=-0.279,0.398,1.537,0.982,0)

*Narrative of Le Moyne, an Artist who Accompanied the French Expedition to Florida Under Laudonnière, 1564. Brevis narratio eorum quæ in Florida Americæ provincia Gallis acciderunt, secunda in illam navigatione duce Renato de Laundomere classis Praefecto anno M. D. LXIII*

Great collections of travel narratives were published in Europe in the second half of the 16th century, reflecting more than a century of European effort to take possession of the New World, both materially and intellectually. A series of travel narratives, known today as “Great and Small Voyages,” was published in Frankfurt from 1590 to 1634 by the print shop of Theodor de Bry.

This collection was distinguished by the importance and the quality of its intaglio illustrations, engraved in copper plate, and produced for the most part using authentic models. The second volume of “Great Voyages” appeared in 1591 and was devoted to Florida. In addition to the accounts by the explorers Jean Ribault and René Goulaine de Laudonnière, it contained a series of 42 engravings based on drawings and watercolors executed on location by Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (circa 1533-88), a Protestant painter from Dieppe.

De Morgues accompanied Laudonnière to Florida in 1564 and escaped the massacre of French colonists by a Spanish armada the following year. His engravings are the only surviving visual testimony to an Indian nation that is now extinct, the Timucua Indians of Florida, with whom the French sought an alliance at the time of their attempted settlement. A dozen drawings were devoted to the countries explored by the French; a second series concerned Timucua warfare and rites; and the last series illustrated the

customs and organization of their society. Accompanied by brief explanatory texts, these engravings are exceptional ethnographic documents regarding one of the vanished peoples of the New World.

### Contributor Names

Bry, Theodor de, 1528-1598 Editor.

L' Ecluse, Charles de, 1526-1609 Translator.

Le Moyne de Morgues, Jacques, 1533?-1588 Author.

### Created / Published

Frankfurt am Main : Theodor de Bry, 1591.

## Galli ad Portum Regalem perveniunt.

V.



**T**ER solitum persequentes, amnem invenerunt. quem Conspectu bellum nuncuparunt: dein tria aut quatuor miliaria ulterius emensi cum essent, ipsis significatum, non procul inde abesse latum aliud flumen magnitudine & amoenitate reliqua superans: quo progressi, ob ejus amoenitatem & amplitudinem Regalem portum appellarunt. Istiti subductis velis, anchoras ad decem orgyias jecerunt: descensione à Praefecto & militibus in continentem facta, amoenissimum esse locum compererunt: nam quercubus, cedris, & alijs arborum generibus constitus erat. Per quas incedentes, Indicos pavones, sive Galli-pavos praetervolantes, & cervos per sylvam errantes conspiciabant. Hujus fluminis ostium latum est tribus Gallicis leucis sive miliaribus, & in duo cornua dividitur; quorum alterum ad Occidentem vergit, alterum ad Septentrionem, idque (secundum quorundam opinionem) interiora regionis penetrans, ad flumen Iordanem tendit: alterum in mare relabatur, ut ab inquilinis observatum est. Patent haec bina cornua magnis duobus miliaribus in latitudinem, & in eorum medio insula est, cujus cusps fluminis ostium spectat. Paulo post navi denuo conscensa, cornu ad Occidentem se convertens ingressi sunt, ut ejus commoditates observarent: & emensis circiter duodecim miliaribus, Indorum catervam conspexerunt, qui scaphis animadversis illico, fugae se mandarunt, relicto quem affabant lupi cervarii catulo: cujus rei causa eum locum Lupi promontorium appellarunt. Ulterius navigantes, in aliam fluminis divisionem inciderunt, ab Oriente labentem, per quam Praefectus, relicto majore alveo, navigare statuit.

## The French Reach Port Royal



*Editor's note: Squash and grapes!*

Although de Bry's publication was titled a "French Expedition to Florida," the page shown at left describes an arrival at Port Royal, South Carolina. "Florida" back then described a large, very loosely defined part of the southern half of the North American Atlantic seaboard lightly under Spanish dominion and briefly contested by the French.

Permission requested 2012-12-11

<https://www.coastaldiscovery.org/portfolio-item/santa-elena/>

The deep natural harbor that we now call Port Royal Sound was one of the primary ports of call for the earliest colonists in what is now the United States.

The Punta de Santa Elena was explored in 1526 by Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, who established the first European municipality (location now lost) in what is now the United States. Over the next few decades there were periodic European visits to the sound. In 1562 French Huguenot Jean Ribault landed at Santa Elena and renamed the harbor “Port Royal” as the “one of the fairest havens of the world”. Ribault’s Charlesfort was short lived due to Native American and Spanish aggression. By 1566 the Spanish had retaken the area and founded the first capital of Spanish Florida, Santa Elena, on what is now Paris Island.

*Permission to quote the following generously granted by  
Thomas Hallock, site editor.*

<https://earlyfloridalit.net/jacques-le-moyne-narrative/>

Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (1533-1588), illustrator and cartographer, accompanied Rene de Laudonniere’s ill-fated attempt to colonize Florida in 1564. The first European artist to reach Florida, Le Moyne charted the St. John’s Bluff region, now Jacksonville, and sketched scenes from the lives of the Timucuan Indians. Le Moyne lost most of his work during the 1565 Spanish attack on Fort Caroline. One of the few French survivors returning to France in 1566, he redrew his sketches and recounted his Florida experience to the King of France, Charles IX. Le Moyne’s illustrations and narrative are of vital historical importance, being some of the earliest visual evidence to accompany a narrative of the sixteenth-century Florida expeditions.

Despite the historical significance, controversy surrounds Le Moyne’s work. Original details may have been lost, or scenes may have been embellished, since Le Moyne redrew most of his images from memory. In 1591, Theodor de Bry made 42 engravings from Le Moyne’s drawings compiling these images and Le Moyne’s

narrative into a book.\* Scholars today question the authenticity of the engravings. Many details do not match Indian culture artists later sketched in the New World, fauna indigenous to Florida or artifacts archaeologists found in regional excavations suggesting either Le Moyne or de Bry had incorporated details known from other parts of the world such as South America. Only one of Le Moyne’s original paintings, in the New York Public Library, survives today. This remaining piece is also in question as scholars debate whether this painting is a Le Moyne original or also a replica.

*Edited by Valerie Lanham, University of South Florida St. Petersburg*

*Editor’s note: So although de Bry’s engraving very prominently features two pretty hugely not-to-scale grapevines, we have no idea if they were part of Le Moyne’s original drawing. I tend to think perhaps not; we’ll see these grapes again.*

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\* The book being discussed here!

## Hakluyt on Native American Grapes and Wine (1584)

*The principal navigations, voyages, traffiques & discoveries of the English nation by Richard Hakluyt, 1552?-1616, Vol VIII.*

1903, Glasgow, J. MacLehose and Son. Page 305 this edition.

Copied from *hakluyt\_principalnavigaoounkngoog.pdf*, downloaded from Google Books. “[this book] has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired.” Quoted through fair use for educational purposes.

“The First Voyage to Virginia”

The first voyage made to the coasts of America, with two barks, where in were Captaines M. Philip Amadas, and M. Arthur Barlowe, who discovered part of the Countrey now called Virginia, Anno 1584. Written by one of the said Captaines, and sent to sir Walter Raleigh knight, at whose charge and direction, the said voyage was set forth...

... we viewed the land about us, being whereas we first landed very sandy and low towards the waterside, but so full of grapes as the very beating and surge of the sea overflowed them, of which we found such plenty, as well there as in all places else, both on the sand and on the green soil on the hills as in the plains, as well on every little shrub as also climbing towards the tops of the high cedars, that I think in all the world the like abundance is not to be found, and myself, having seen those parts of Europe that most abound, find such difference as were incredible to be written.

...After we had thus dryed ourselves, she brought us into the inner roome, where shee set on the boord standing along the house, some wheate like furmentie, sodden Venison, and roasted, fish sodden, boyled, and roasted, Melons raw, and sodden, rootes of divers kindes, and divers fruites: their drinke is commonly water, but while the grape lasteth, they drinke wine, and for want of caskes to keepe it, all the yere after they drink water, but it is sodden with Ginger in it, and blacke Sinamon, and sometimes Sassaphras, and divers other wholesome, and medicinable hearbes and trees.

... in this enclosed sea\* there are about a hundred islands of divers bignesses, whereof one is sixteen miles long,\*\* at which we were finding it to be a most pleasant and fertile ground, replenished with goodly cedars and divers other sweet woods full of currants, of flax, and many other notable commodities, which we at that time had no leisure to view.

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\* The Albermarle and Pamlico sounds between the Outer Banks of North Carolina and the mainland.

\*\* Roanoke Island.

## John White on Virginia Grapes

<https://historymash.com/2019/03/17/the-first-map-of-roanoke-island/>

*Materials from this web page © James Findley and used here with his permission.*

### The First Map of Roanoke Island

1585

James Findley, March 17, 2019

John White produced the first English map of Roanoke Island as a rough sketch entitled “a description of the land of Virginia.” It was the first English map of America made by direct observation. The map covered territory between the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds, Mattamuskeet Lake, and various and sundry other small islands and unidentified place names. It also covered some of the landscape and commodities of the region including fish, grasses, sandbars, and water depth.

Historians for a long time mis-associated the origin of the map with John Smith. It was believed Smith drew the map sometime around 1618 and sent it off to England in a letter. However, historian David Beers Quinn concluded that the map was most likely drawn by John White in late summer/early fall of 1585, and sent to England in early September 1585 on either the ships the *Roebuck* or the *Elizabeth*.

It is not yet possible to assign authorship to John White despite the handwriting on the map resembling John White's.

Here is the map as I found it at the National Archives in Kew, London.

*(See next page.)*

*Editor's note: The illustrations on his page appear to be Findley's photo(s) of the map document, which he identifies as item “MPG 1/584, extracted from CO 1/1, 1585.” Searching the National Archives web site, that item is noted as has not having been digitized.*

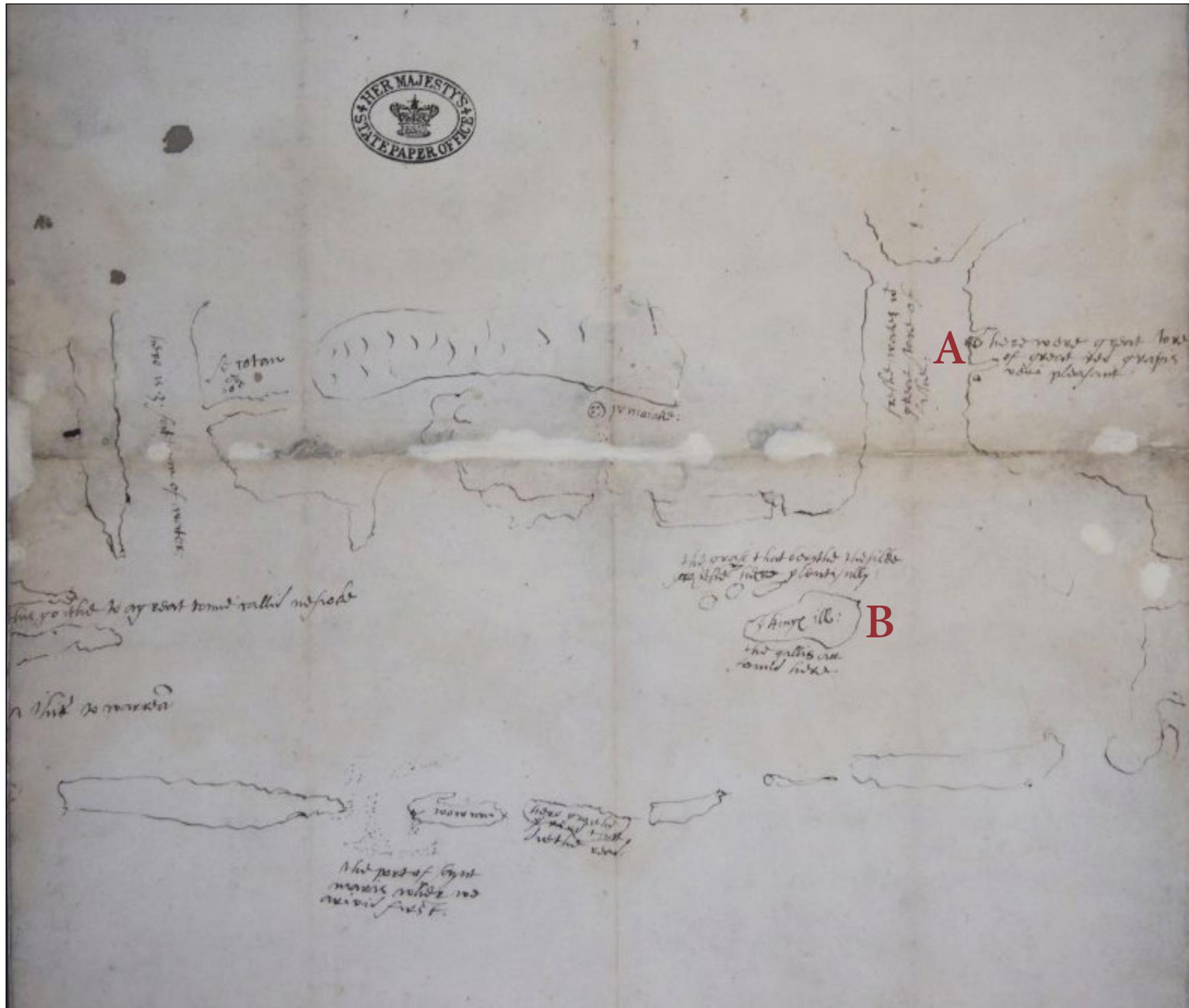
*The identifications of the places noted here by Findley are based on analysis of the map by David Beers Quinn, especially in his work The Roanoke Voyages, 1584-90, Vol. I/II, London, Hakluyt Society, 1955.*

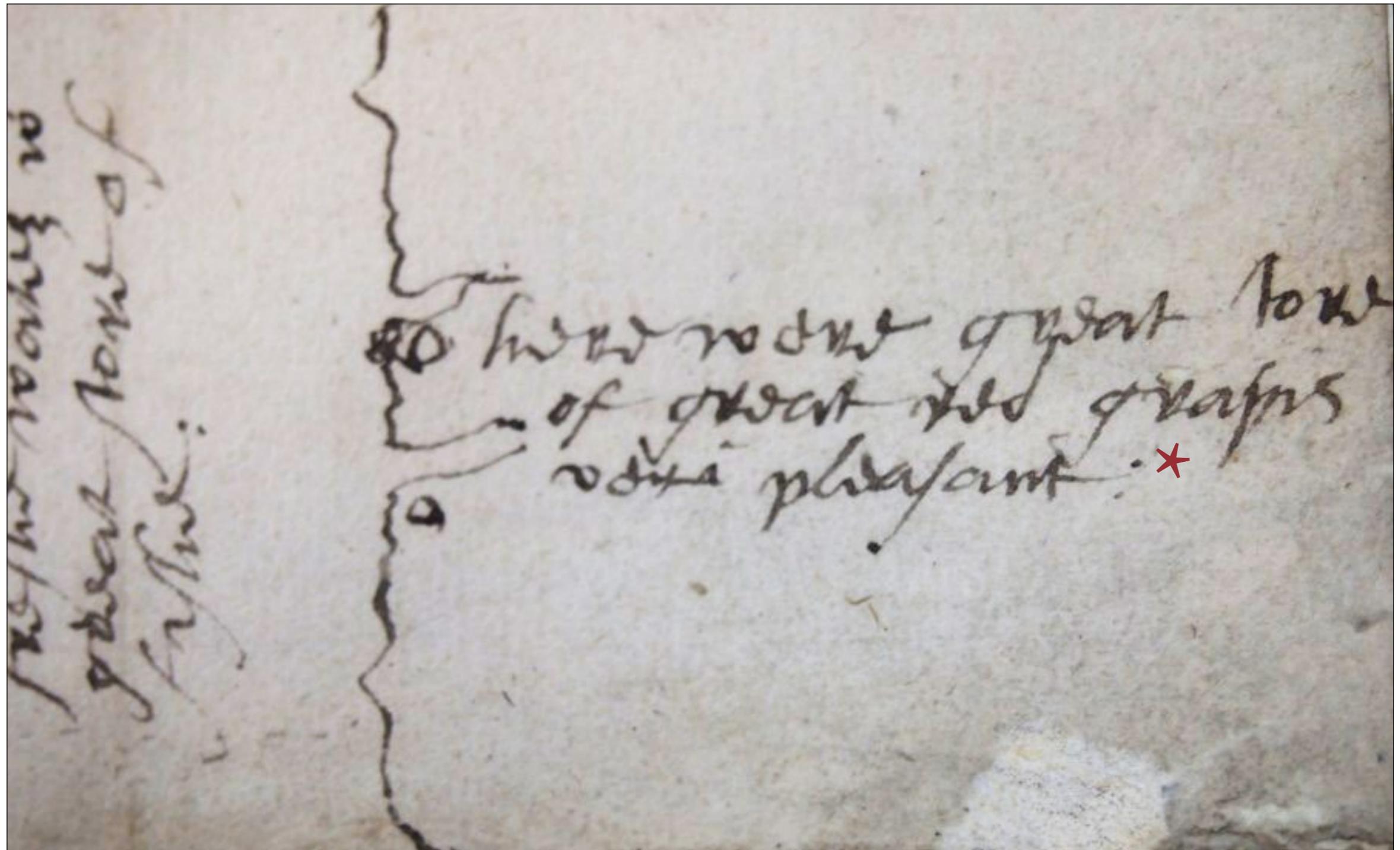
*Editor's note: (A) on the map is the north shore of "Albemarle Sound showing two rivers flowing into it, the Roanoke and Chowan. It was noted on the map as a source of fresh water for drinking and plentiful fish for eating." Description by Findley. Roughly perhaps Stevenson Point?*

*There are several rivers entering the sound at (A), so identifying the exact location of the "red grapes" isn't possible to the mile.*

*Quinn also identified "ye kinges ill" (B on map) as Roanoke Island.*

*But in very round numbers, the distance from (A) to (B), Roanoke Island, home of the Mother Vine(yard), is about twenty miles.*





\* here were great store of great red grapes very pleasant

The great store of great red grapes were either Summer (*Vitis aestivalis*) or Muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) grapes. I like to imagine they were muscadine grapes because eating muscadines is a rite of passage for all North Carolinians.

Editor's note: Grapes were on people's minds during the end of the 16th century!

## The arrival of the Englishmen [sic] in Virginia (1585)

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Illustration from *Library of Virginia*, <https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/archivesmonth/2005/Mariners/>, *The Mariners' Museum Images*. Permission granted 2022-01-05.

<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/1219hpr-138ae3f39f4f3a4/>

### Anglorum in Virginiam aduentus (The arrival of the Englishmen [sic] in Virginia)

English colonists approach the island of Roanoke in a small boat in 1585 in this colored engraving by Theodor de Bry based on a watercolor painting by John White. Due to shallow waters, the English had difficulty finding a safe passage to the protected island, and several of their ships (seen in the foreground)\* foundered in the shoals. The location of various Virginia Indian groups and villages are also shown on the map. De Bry added details to his engravings based on descriptions by Thomas Hariot, who accompanied White and approximately 600 colonists to Roanoke in 1585.

\* Along the outer shores of the barrier islands.



De Bry's engravings accompanied *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*, Hariot's description of his year at Roanoke, which was intended to serve, in part, as a justification for further colonizing efforts. These rare, hand-colored versions of the illustrations appeared in a 1590 edition published in Latin.

*Editor's note: Compare this coincidentally a-pair-of-bigger-than-trees-grape-vines (on left below) to the pair from the earlier map produced by de Bry (page 7) and shown again at right. These vines have to be a generic representation, whose presence I believe is an invention not based on any original drawings. But, their use shows that grapes—as we saw on John White's map—were on at least some people's minds.*

*Was this an attempt at boosterism?*



## A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1588)

[https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.](https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=etas)

[cgi?article=1020&context=etas](https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=etas)

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### THOMAS HARIOT

#### A BRIEF AND TRUE REPORT OF THE NEWFOUND LAND OF VIRGINIA (1588)

This is an online electronic text edition of the first book published by an English colonist in America. Its author, Thomas Hariot or Harriot, was a cartographer, mathematician, astronomer, linguist, and philosopher, who was a participant in Sir Walter Raleigh's first attempt to establish a colony in "Virginia," on Roanoke Island in modern-day North Carolina, from June 1585 until June 1586. Hariot had learned the rudiments of the Algonkian language from two natives brought back to England from an earlier exploratory voyage, and he served as interpreter and liaison with the native peoples of the surrounding region. His *Brief and True Report* focuses largely upon the native inhabitants, giving much valuable information on their food sources, agricultural methods, living arrangements, political organization, and religion.

Published in 1588, with Raleigh's support, to help incite both investment and settlement, Hariot's 13,000-word account also gives many details of the "merchantable commodities," plants, animals, and economic opportunities to be found there. Written by an ethnographer and natural scientist who was an integral part of the first English attempt at American colonization, the *Brief and True Report* is by far the most important early English account of North America

*Wine:* There are two kinds of grapes that the soile doth yeeld naturally: the one is small and sowre of the ordinarie bignesse as ours in England: the other farre greater & of himselfe lushious sweet. When they are planted and husbanded as they ought, a principall commoditie of wines by them may be raised. [Page 12]

*Grapes* there are of two sorts which I mentioned in the marchantable comodities. [Page 26]

*Editor's note:* Hariot says nothing about any actual wine making by Indigenous peoples or colonists. That "wines by them may be raised" sounds to me like a bit of enthusiastic hope.

*I find nothing online about what the "sowre" and "lushious" grapes might be. Fox grapes (Vitus labrusca) versus (Vitus rotundifolia; muscadine)?.*

## American Indian and Alaska Native Aboriginal Use of Alcohol in The United States

*Permission asked at <https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/research-and-practice/centers-programs/caianh/about/contact-us> 2021-12-14.*

*American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research. Copyright: Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health. Colorado School of Public Health/University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus ([www.ucdenver.edu/caianh](http://www.ucdenver.edu/caianh))*

Patrick Abbott, M.D.

Abstract: Alcohol beverages prior to White contact originated with the Mayan and the Aztec Nations and spread to the American Indians of the Southwest. Surprisingly, there are number of accounts of alcohol use among other American Indians and Alaska Natives. Beverages were limited to wine and beer, and included: balche, pulque, and “haren pitahaya” wines, tulpi beer and other beverages. White contact brought dramatic shifts in the use and function of alcoholic beverages in American Indian and Alaska Native societies.

Prior to White contact, the use of alcoholic beverages in the United States was primarily confined to American Indian groups in the Southwest. However, there was scattered use in other parts of the country (Driver, 1969; Heidenreich, 1976). The acceptance or rejection of alcohol varied among tribes. Some tribes readily accepted alcohol to extend their secular, social, religious, and supernatural experience. Others, initially rejected its use later to develop a taste for alcohol while others continuously turned away from use of alcohol (Heath, 1983; Heidenreich, 1976). Most American Indians and Alaska Natives knowledge and use of alcohol coincided with White contact (16th and 17th century).

...

### Northeastern Tribes of the United States

In the woodlands of the northeastern United States lived a large number of Indian groups that spoke primarily three languages: Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Siouan (Josephy, 1991; Spenser, et al., 1977). Their livelihood varied from hunting and fishing to forming large agricultural complexes. They lived south of Maine and in the Ohio River Valley. One of the agricultural complexes, the Hopewellian culture, was one of the most sophisticated societies north of Middle America. Alcoholic beverage use in this region is sparsely documented. There is some evidence that the Huron made a mild beer made from corn (Cherrington, 1925). They, apparently, placed unripe corn into a stagnant pool of water, left it for several months and from this made a fermented gruel. This was drunk at tribal feasts. Reference has been made to “maple wine” and “sassafras beer” but it appears that these beverages were used before fermentation (Heath, 1983). The French, Dutch, and English colonists quickly settled this land, lured by the land’s abundant resources. In the trade that ensued, alcohol emerged as a vital and often destructive commodity.

The colonists that immigrated from Europe placed a great deal of importance on their alcoholic beverages. “The Puritans set sail for the New World with 14 tons of water, 42 tons of beer, and 10,000 gallons of wine” (Anderson, 1988, preface). Samoset, a member of the Wampanoag Indians, assisted the Pilgrims in the first winter and became an enthusiastic participant in the use of alcohol in their first Thanksgiving feast (Lender & Martin, 1982). This convivial setting changed rapidly as the new settlers became concerned that the Indians could not hold their liquor and was the genesis of the long-term stereotype the “firewater myth” (Leland, 1976). As a result of this myth, there ensued a number of attempts by the colonies and

later the United States to halt the sale of alcoholic beverages to the American Indians. This eventually succeeded in 1832 with passage of the Indian Intercourse Act which remained in force until 1953.

### Southeastern Tribes of the United States

South of Tennessee to the Gulf of Mexico and east of the Mississippi River lived a large array of tribes, chiefly from the Muskogean branch of the Gulf language stock (Josephy, 1991). They lived in small farming communities cultivating a range of crops: corn, beans, melons, and tobacco, and harvesting nuts, berries, and sunflowers from the forests. First contact with Europeans occurred in 1513 when Juan Ponce de Leon discovered Florida. There is only limited evidence that alcoholic beverages existed prior to White contact, but there was no lack for ingredients; the southeastern tribes agricultural life style was an ideal setting for the production of alcohol. There is also conjecture that Indians from Mesoamerica may have made early contact with tribes along the Mississippi Valley; this could have occurred by sailing across the Gulf of Mexico (Josephy, 1991). If this had taken place, Mesoamerican Indians may have exchanged their knowledge of producing alcohol.

The Creek in Georgia were reported to have prepared a mildly intoxicating drink from berries, but there was little evidence of drunken behavior until White contact (Scomp, 1888). Likewise, persimmon wine was produced by tribes in the Southeast, but it was used prior to fermentation (Driver, 1969; MacAndrew & Edgerton, 1969). Finally, the Cherokee tribe located in the Carolinas made limited use of fermented juices of wild fruit (Cherrington, 1925).

“Black Drink” was made along the Atlantic Sea Coast. It was a non-alcoholic black liquid purgative made from the leaves of the cassina shrub and used for spiritual purification, mental power, and physical strength. This drink did not contain any alcohol but was an emetic and stimulate containing small amounts of caffeine.

*Editor’s note: Dr. Abbott’s main concern is with the uses of alcohol by Native Americans, and the social and health concerns that arose by the introduction of alcoholic beverages in quantity by Europeans. He speaks mainly about southwest Native Americans, among which alcohol use was more frequent, but apparently mostly in religious settings.*

*The history quoted here seems to me to suggest it unlikely wine made by fermenting grapes was offered to Captains M. Philip Amadas, or M. Arthur Barlowe, Perhaps grape juice?*

## Reimer on Scuppernongs, 1909

*Editor's Note: The beginning of this article may be of historical interest. The main purpose of including some of this article is found in the last paragraph quoted: "Old Vines on Roanoke Island."*

*The reader who might like to peruse the rest is referred to the PDF.*

This text was transcribed from pages 179 ff in 527555.pdf, retrieved from <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/505861>

### ORIGIN AND IMPORTANCE OF THE SCUPPERNONG

[An article printed in...]

THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION OF THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND MECHANIC ARTS, FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1909. RALEIGH, E. M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1911

*By F. C. Reimer, Horticulturist.*

One of the most important things connected with the introduction of a new fruit is a careful study of the conditions which surround the plant in its native home. In the planting of fruits during the past, often too little attention has been given to this matter. The home of a species usually indicates the locality or localities that it is best suited to. It determines in a large measure where that fruit can be grown and where it is likely to give best results. A species is more or less a product of the locality in which it originated, as the conditions prevailing there have in a large measure produced it. By natural selection, nature eliminates those forms not adapted to the environment.

This principle is well illustrated by our native fruits. The grapes of the eastern portion of the United States are far better suited to that section than any of the foreign species. This is also true of our native species of plums, blackberries, dewberries and raspberries.

The same principle applies particularly to varieties. A variety is usually best suited to the particular section in which it originated. The varieties of apples, peaches, pears and plums best suited to the Southern States are those which have originated in the South: for example, the Red June and Bonum apples, the Greensboro and Lady Ingold peaches, which originated in this State, reach their greatest perfection here.

The history and development of most of our important native fruits has been determined and recorded. Bailey and Munson have traced the development of our leading species of grapes, except *Vitis rotundifolia* —the Muscadine grape—on which practically nothing has been done. It is rather difficult to determine why this is true, as it is by far the most important species of grape in the South. The history of the different varieties of the Muscadine grape should be fully determined and preserved. This species has always been a very interesting one to North Carolinians, as it is native to the eastern half of the State, and most of the varieties have originated there.

#### HISTORY OF THE SCUPPERNONG.

**Confusion Regarding Early History.**—The following opinions have been offered regarding the origin of the Scuppernong: that it is a foreign variety introduced into this country many years ago; that it is a native of Virginia and was brought to North Carolina by the early settlers; and that it is a native of North Carolina. Of those who hold to the last belief, some claim Tyrrell County and others Roanoke Island as its original home.

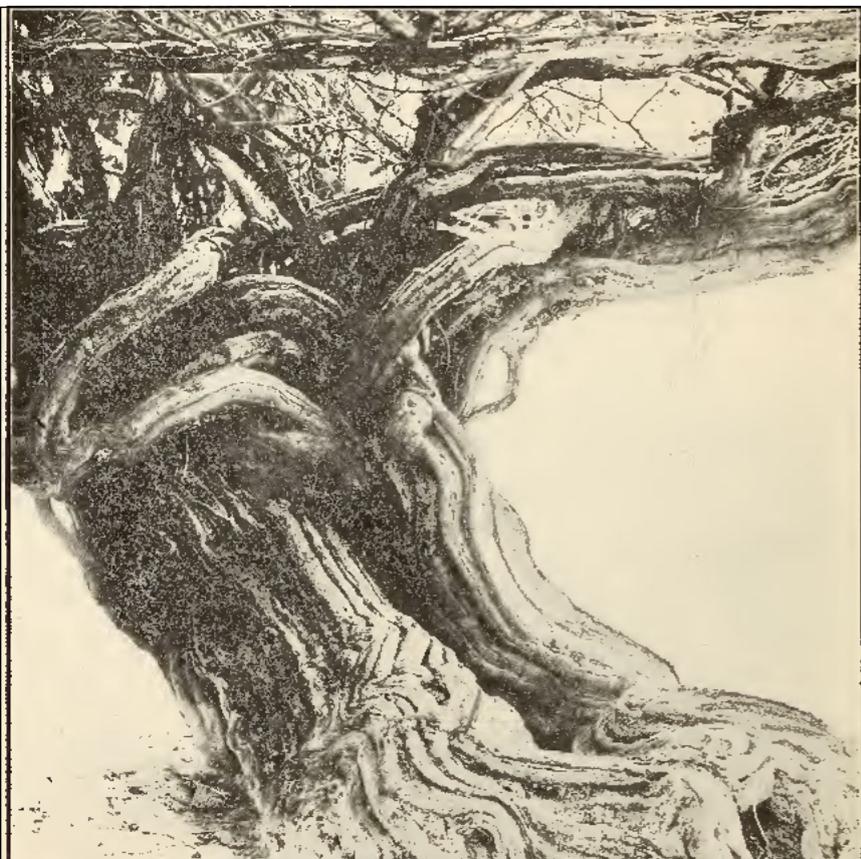


Fig. 1.—  
Characteristic Old Scuppernong Trunk.  
(Circumference seven feet six inches.)

Although much has been written regarding this variety during the last half century, no one has indicated how and when the name “Scuppernong” was assigned to it. It is believed by some that this honor belongs to the North Carolina Indians; by others, that it belongs to the early white settlers. Some maintain that the name was taken from Scuppernong River, and others that Scuppernong River was named for the grape.

The writer determined long ago to clear up this confusion. The history has been determined, and the facts, we believe, are of importance to the grape industry of this State and the South, and to horticulture in general.

**Collecting the Facts.**—It was first necessary to review all of the old books, magazines and periodicals on Southern horticulture and agriculture, especially those on grapes; but very little information could be found regarding the origin of this grape. The most important facts were obtained from files of the old newspapers of the State, especially those published during the early part of the nineteenth century. Information of considerable value was also found in some of the old State and family records.

The writer made an extensive trip to all of the old grape sections in the eastern part of the State. All of the old vines of which any record could be found were examined and carefully measured, and their history was determined as fully as possible. Interviews were held with the descendants of the earliest grape growers; and in this way facts were obtained that throw much light on the subject.

**The Original Scuppernong Vine.**—It seems to be impossible to locate with absolute certainty the original Scuppernong vine, as no authentic records of the original vine can be found. This, of course, is perfectly natural, as little or no interest was taken in recording the history of any fruits at that early date. The writer feels certain that the original vine was found in northeastern North Carolina, and probably in Tyrrell County.

The earliest authentic record that we have of this grape comes from New Bern, North Carolina. According to a letter by Judge Gaston, dated June 4, 1838, his old neighbor, a Mr. Hickman, brought a young plant of this grape from Tyrrell County, about 1760, and planted it near New Bern, where it became generally known as the Hickman grape.

The most reliable information to be obtained regarding the finding of the original plant of this grape was supplied by the great-granddaughter of the supposed discoverer, Isaac Alexander. The history which has been handed down verbally from generation to generation in that family is, in substance, as follows:

Isaac Alexander went from Mecklenburg to Tyrrell County about the middle of the eighteenth century to take possession of a tract of land granted to him by the English king. In exploring the region, he found not far from Albemarle Sound a wild grapevine bearing large, luscious white grapes. It is said that this was the original vine which many years later was named Scuppernong.

As that region became settled, the vine was rapidly propagated, and, according to several authentic articles, nearly every home in the locality had near it at least one of these vines at the opening of the nineteenth century. It was soon discovered that this grape made excellent wine, and as early as 1809 extensive plantings of it could be found in the vicinity of Lake Scuppernong. The grape was commonly spoken of as the White Grape.

On December 21, 1809, the following letter, written by Governor Smith, appeared in *The Star*, a newspaper then published at Raleigh, North Carolina:

*“Description of an extraordinary and excellent kind of grape produced in the northeastern part of North Carolina, but not generally known even in that State.*

“The grape is large and sweet, of the species of the Fox grape, but white; has been cultivated a number of years in the neighborhood of

Lake Phelps, but it is not clearly understood whence it originated. It is supposed to be a native. There are few settlers about the lake but what have a grapevine, which is generally planted at the root of some large mulberry, beech or oak tree, or trained along an arbor of poles lying on forks high enough for a person to walk under and gather grapes conveniently. The vines are never pruned, but suffered to run in a rude state, and many people have vines that will make them a barrel of wine.

“The wine is made by gathering the ripe grapes, picking out all those which are green or bruised, and squeezing the juice into a cider press as soon as they are gathered (for if they lie from one day to another the juice will sour and the wine will always have that taste), when it is put in a clean barrel. To every three quarts of grape juice one quart of brandy is added. After three or four days the wine is raked off till it is clear, and when it gets age is much approved of.

“The process above mentioned is that now followed, but as there are several gentlemen of information sending to the people in that neighborhood to make wine for them, a better process may be discovered. Some have tried fermentation, but it did not answer.”

**Naming the Scuppernong.**—On January 31, 1811, *The Star* published under the heading, “North Carolina Wine from Native Grapes,” part of a report made by James Blount, of Scuppernong, North Carolina, who had been appointed to take the census of Washington County. In this report he states that Washington County produced thirteen hundred and sixty-eight gallons of wine from native grapes during 1810. Mr. Blount in his report further says:

“Having taken an account of the wine in my division, I think it my duty to state the result of my inquiries on this small but very interesting branch of our infant manufactures.

“The large white grape from which most of this wine is made is said to be a native of America, and probably of North Carolina, as no person can tell its origin; and I feel inclined to join in this opinion, having

about three years ago found a vine with ripe fruit on it of this kind in the woods, where it is very improbable it could have been planted. I am told the grape from the seed will be purple and larger than from the cuttings of the vine, though not so sweet. These vines thrive well on various kinds of soil, but delight most in that which is loose and sandy, and if care is taken to manure them for two or three years it will afterwards only be necessary to keep the weeds clear, prune and scaffold them; and one vine is worth more than fifty apple trees.”

The editors of *The Star* add the following comments to Mr. Blount’s report:

“Our readers will recollect a communication on this singular and excellent species of grape (which for the sake of distinction, until we are better instructed, we shall denominate the Scuppernong Grape) in the 239th page of our first volume. That communication excited considerable interest and procured for us another favour of the same kind from Mr. Cooper, which will be seen in page 38 of our second volume.”

The grape was named “Scuppernong” because of the numerous plantings of this variety along the Scuppernong River at that time. The name was also given as a compliment to James Blount, who lived near that river and whose excellent articles on this grape attracted much attention at that time.

At that time, Dr. Calvin Jones and Thomas Henderson were editors of *The Star*. The honor, then, of naming this grape belongs to the editors of a Raleigh (North Carolina) newspaper. It is very probable that it should properly be given to Dr. Calvin Jones, who was a noted naturalist, and edited the agricultural part of *The Star*.

The writer feels certain that this is the first time that this grape was designated as *Scuppernong*. He has not been able to find this name used in any of the earlier writings; and Blount, in his report two years previous to that date, speaks of it as “the large White Grape.” The following extracts from a letter written by James Saunders of Chowan County, North Carolina, to the editors of

*The Star* and published in that paper April 17, 1812, under the title “Scuppernong Grapes and Wine,” also lead to the same conclusion:

“Your publishing with such lively interest the properties of that excellent fruit you have named the ‘Scuppernong Grape,’ while it appeared you were yourselves quite a stranger to it, has induced me to endeavor to prepare and convey to you, this fall, a few slips of that valuable and most luxurious article.

“The usual or common name given those grapes here is the ‘White Fox.’ So far as my information goes, I think it is most probably a native of Roanoke Island, near Roanoke Inlet, where some have conjectured Sir Walter Raleigh either found or left them. However, I have heard no person object to the name you have given, nor do I expect that any will, for the neighborhood about Scuppernong for several years has abounded with them, and for some time past the inhabitants have been turning them to good account, and, with the help of the encouraging *Star*, this branch of economy and industry may be brought to high perfection.”

**Origin of the Word Scuppernong.**—The word Scuppernong is a corruption of the Indian word *ascuponung*, meaning place of the ascupo, ascopo, or askopo. The word *ascopo* was the Algonquin Indian name for the Sweet Bay (*Magnolia glauca*). This tree is very abundant along the Scuppernong River.

On the old maps of the State we find that the word *ascuponung* was gradually changed until it has become badly corrupted. Eman Bowen gives it as *cuscoponung* in 1752. On a map by Joshua Fry, published a little later, it is given as *cusponung*. In 1770 John Collet changes it to *Scuponung*. In 1771 James Cook again changes it to *Scuponing*. Some time between 1775 and 1800 it was finally changed to *Scuppernong*.

**Early Names of the Scuppernong.**—During the early history of this grape and before the name Scuppernong became generally used, it was known by different names in different localities. The

original name was the White Grape. Around New Bern, North Carolina, it was known as the Hickman grape, having been named for a Mr. Hickman who introduced it into that locality. It has also been designated as the Roanoke Grape, White Scuppernong, and Green Scuppernong.

#### Old Vines on Roanoke Island.

It is often stated that the original Scuppernong vine is still growing on Roanoke Island, where it was first found. The writer feels quite certain that this is a mistake. He examined these vines on Roanoke Island carefully and found that there are five vines of about equal age that undoubtedly were planted there, as they stand in two straight rows. It is true that these vines are very old, but certainly not as old as some in Tyrrell County.

It is not definitely known who carried the young plants of this grape from Tyrrell County to Roanoke Island, but as there was considerable traveling and trading between this island and the mainland along Albemarle Sound, it is readily understood how the vine or vines could have been carried to the island.

It is stated by some that the vines were carried from Tyrrell County to Roanoke Island by Ann Ashbee. This may be possible, as Ann Ashbee in 1799 married Maurice Baum, who in 1797 had purchased the property on Roanoke Island on which the old vines now stand. Certain records seem to indicate, however, that these vines were planted at an earlier date.

...

*Editors Note: The article continues with many pages describing native grapes, cultivation of them, wine-making in North Carolina, etc. I consider the above to be the sections most relevant to the Mother Vine(yard) and Mother Vine.*

*Unfortunately, F. C. Reimer does not state what "certain records" indicate "these vines [assumed to be the Mother Vine(yard) vines] were planted at an earlier date." Darn.*

## The Muscadine Grape: Botany, Viticulture, History, and Current Industry

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Excerpted from HORTSCIENCE, VOL. 25(7), JULY 1990

The muscadine grape (*Vitis rotundifolia* Michx.) was the first American grape species to be cultivated. This fruit has a long history in commercial and backyard culture. Picking muscadines to enjoy as juice along with muscadine pie on grandmother's back porch has a strong place in childhood memories of many native Southerners. The oldest and most consistent commercial interest in muscadines has been in wine, but juice and fresh fruit markets have also been developed. Muscadines so differ from "bunch" grapes genetically, anatomically, physiologically, and in taste that they should be considered a separate fruit.

...

### BOTANICAL BACKGROUND

Most authorities divide *Vitis* into the subgenera *Euvinis* Planch. (the familiar European and American bunch grapes that include *V. vinifera* L. and *V. labrusca* L.) and *Muscadinia* Planch. (sometimes referred to as berry grapes) (Dearing, 1938; Winkler et al., 1974). However, there has been a long-standing controversy, with some authors placing *Muscadinia* as a separate genus (Bouquet, 1980; Olmo, 1986; Small, 1913).

Fossil evidence suggests that *Muscadinia* was widely distributed over the North American, European, and Asian continents before the last ice age (Bouquet, 1980). Thus, *Muscadinia* may be an ancestral genus that led to *Vitis*, adapted to temperate climates, and *Ampelocissus*, adapted to tropical climates, as the ice age receded. A wild grape found in India has similar characteristics to the

*Muscadinia* (Syamal and Patel, 1953) and may reflect the pre-ice age distribution of this group.

... The third species, *V. rotundifolia* Michx. (common names: Muscadine, Bullace, Bull Grape, Bullet Grape, Southern Fox Grape), is the only commercial *Muscadinia* grape, and the name "muscadine" is reserved exclusively for this species. The majority of *V. rotundifolia* vines in the wild bear dark fruit. A very old name for these grapes is "Bullace" or "Bullis", or less commonly "Bull" or "Bullet" grapes (Gohdes, 1983; Hedrick, 1908). Light-colored bronze-fruited genotypes are occasionally found in the wild and are often referred to generically as "scuppernongs". However, there are many cultivars of bronze muscadines, and 'Scuppernong' is the name of a specific cultivar.

The natural range of *V. rotundifolia* extends from Delaware to central Florida and along the Gulf of Mexico to eastern Texas (L.H. Bailey Hortorium, 1976; Dearing, 1938; Munson, 1909; Weaver, 1976). The species extends north along the Mississippi River to Missouri and near the Appalachian Mountains from the east and west. Temperatures in this region seldom go lower than - 12C and more rarely to - 18C (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1973). These vines do best on fertile sandy loams and alluvial soils, and grow poorly on wet and heavy soils. Natural populations are found in shady, well-drained bottom lands along rivers that are subject to neither extended drought nor waterlogging (Hedrick, 1908; Munson, 1909).

...

### EARLY MUSCADINE CULTIVARS

Muscadines have long been harvested from wild and semicultivated vines (Hedrick, 1908). According to Hedrick, Native Americans used the fruit, and the earliest Europeans to reach America noted the abundance of *V. rotundifolia*. Captain John Hopkins reported that Spanish missionaries in Florida were

making muscadine wine in 1565. He also noted that Amadas and Barlowe reported the abundance of these grapes in coastal North Carolina on their first voyage to this continent in 1584. The latter described the land “so full of grapes...on the sand and on the green soil, on the hills as on the plains, as well as on every little shrub as also climbing towards the tops of tall cedars, that I think in all the world the like abundance is not to be found”.

Muscadines have been cultivated in vineyards since the mid-18th century (Reimer, 1909). The first cultivars were simply selections propagated from the wild (Reimer, 1909). Although there were 35 to 40 named muscadine cultivars in 1920, only a few were grown extensively (Young, 1920). Better known early cultivars and approximate dates introduced were ‘Scuppernong’ (mid-1700s), ‘Flowers’ (1800), ‘Hopkins’ (1845), ‘Thomas’ (1845), ‘Mish’ (or ‘Meisch’) (1846), ‘James’ (1866), and ‘Memory’ (1868) (Husmann and Dearing, 1916; Reimer, 1909).<sup>\*</sup> All early cultivars were female types and required pollinator vines for optimum fruit set (Young, 1920).

The cultivar eventually named ‘Scuppernong’ was the first native American grape to be cultivated (Hedrick, 1908; Reimer, 1909). ‘Scuppernong’ was the dominant cultivar ‘grown from the mid-18th century until as recently as 1947, and it remains the most widely known muscadine (Reimer, 1909; Dearing, 1947; Woodroof, 1934).

Popular culture often gives credit for discovery of the original ‘Scuppernong’ vine to Sir Walter Raleigh’s colony when they landed on Roanoke Island, N.C. (Gohdes, 1982; Hedrick, 1908). However, Reimer (1909) concluded that the original ‘Scuppernong’ vine was found by Isaac Alexander in the mid-18th century along the Scuppernong River in Tyrrell County, N.C. The vine was soon widely propagated and was likely carried to Roanoke Island some time in the late 18th century. This cultivar was initially known by

several names, especially the “Big White Grape”, and it was not until 1811 that the name ‘Scuppernong’ was assigned by Calvin Jones, an editor for *The Star* newspaper of Raleigh, N.C. The name was chosen because of the numerous plantings of this grape along the Scuppernong River and around Lake Scuppernong. The word scuppernong is apparently a corruption of “ascuponung”, an Algonquin Indian word for “place of the Sweet Bay plant” [*Magnolia virginiana* L. (*M. glauca* L.)], found abundantly along the Scuppernong River. ‘Scuppernong’ was especially valued for its hardiness, tolerance of neglect, and quality as a table and wine grape.

Bronze muscadines were soon recognized as superior for wine because the nonacylated diglucoside anthocyanin pigments of dark muscadine grapes are unstable and easily oxidized, in contrast to the monoglucoside and acylated monoglucoside anthocyanin pigments of Euvitis grapes (Ballinger et al., 1974).

Recently, wild muscadine genotypes have been identified with mono- and diglucoside forms of anthocyanin pigments (Goldy et al., 1989). Continuous vegetative propagation of this cultivar for nearly 250 years, and probable introduction of other bronze muscadines under the same name, has resulted in the formation of a number of strains of ‘Scuppernong’ (Woodroof, 1934). ‘Scuppernong’ vines in production have been reported as old as 150 years (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1973).

...

Many newly released cultivars are being planted and will change cultivar ranking in the future. ‘Doreen’ is a new cultivar increasing in importance, while ‘Hunt’, ‘Magnolia’, and ‘Scuppernong’ are examples of important older cultivars that are being replaced.

*Editor’s note: So, unless there is more up-to-date information on the use of Scuppernong grapes than this 1990 publication, Scuppernongs are being deprecated. One wonders how to find out what’s for sale at the local farmer’s market?*

<sup>\*</sup> List edited into chronological, rather than original alphabetical, order

## State Fruit of North Carolina: Scuppernong Grape

<https://www.ncpedia.org/symbols/fruit>

by *Steven Case, Amy Kemp and Kelly Agan*

NC Government & Heritage Library, 2017, 2018.

See also: [Scuppernong Grape](#) (Encyclopedia of North Carolina); [Fox Grape](#)

### State Fruit of North Carolina: Scuppernong Grape

“This article was written by librarians at the NC Government & Heritage Library at the State Library of North Carolina and as such is considered it to be in the public domain.”

—Kelly Agan; Digital Projects Librarian, NC Government & Heritage Library, NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources.

The General Assembly of 2001 named the Scuppernong grape as the official State Fruit (Session laws, 2001, c. 488). The same session law declared the strawberry and blueberry to be the state berries.

### Selection as the State Fruit

The selection of the North Carolina state fruit and berries was an extremely long and contentious process. It began in February of 2001, when a class of fourth graders from Tommy's Road Elementary School in Wayne county petitioned for the strawberry to become the official state fruit. Their proposal was sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Russell, and won the backing of the North Carolina House of Representatives.

In September, however, fourth and fifth graders from Manteo Elementary School in Dare County presented a proposal to make the scuppernong grape the state fruit, backed by Sen. Fountain Odom of Mecklenburg.

In October, the senate proposed compromise legislation making the Scuppernong grape the state fruit and the blueberry and strawberry the state berries. The compromise was brought back to the students of Wayne county, who rejected it.

Eventually, after much debate between the House and the Senate, the grape/strawberry/blueberry compromise prevailed and went to Governor Mike Easley for his signature. The Wayne County strawberry supporters submitted a last effort for their cause, writing to the Governor and asking him to use his veto power to reject the bill. Nevertheless, on December 16th, the bill was signed into law.

The fruit debate occurred during the longest and most expensive legislative session in North Carolina history. Several congressmen at the time complained about how bills like the symbol proposals caused them to 'fritter away' time debating non-essential issues. Other legislators disagreed, citing the debate as an investment in

activating young citizen involvement in the legislative process.

### About the Scuppernong Grape

The Scuppernong (*vitis rotundifolia*) is a variety of muscadine grape, and has the distinction of being the first grape ever actively cultivated in the United States. It was named for the Scuppernong River, which runs from Washington County to the Albemarle Sound. Giovanni de Verrazano noticed this variety as far back as 1524, and explorers for Sir Walter Raleigh (or Raleigh, as it's sometimes spelled) in the 1580's sent back reports from the Outer Banks of grape vines that "...covered every shrub and climbed the tops of high cedars. In all the world, a similar abundance was not to be found." The Roanoke colonists are credited with discovering the Scuppernong "Mother Vineyard," a vine that is now over 400 years old and covers half an acre.

Because of the Scuppernong, North Carolina was first in the country in wine production through the 19th century. Today, the scuppernong is used in jams, jellies, and wine. In 2016, North Carolina was ranked 11th in total state grape production.



## *Vitis: Scuppernong*

Artist: Newton, Amanda Almira, ca. 1860-1943

Scientific name: *Vitis*

Common name: grapes

Variety: Scuppernong

Geographic origin: Roanoke Island, North Carolina, United States

Physical description: 1 art original; 17 x 25 cm.

Specimen: 34830

Year: 1905

Date created: 1905-09-26

From the USDA Pomological Watercolors, NAL Digital Collections:

<https://usdawatercolors.nal.usda.gov/pom/catalog.xhtml?id=POM00006084>

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# An Act Adopting The Official Fruit and Berries of North Carolina

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2001

SESSION LAW 2001-488

HOUSE BILL 382

AN ACT ADOPTING THE OFFICIAL FRUIT AND BERRIES OF NORTH CAROLINA.

## Part I. North Carolina's Heritage Of Farming

Whereas, North Carolina's economy originated and developed as an agrarian economy with a cornucopia of fruits and vegetables; and

Whereas, the State takes great pride in its rich heritage of farming; and

Whereas, there are still many families who base their livelihood in farming and who are continuing the North Carolina tradition of producing goods from our land; and

Whereas, one of the main sources of agricultural production in the State is the production of fruits and berries of several varieties; and

## Part II. The Scuppernong Grape.

Whereas, North Carolina is the home of our nation's first cultivated grape, the Scuppernong; and

Whereas, the Scuppernong grape was named after the Scuppernong River in North Carolina; and

Whereas, British explorers in 1584 and 1585 reported to Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh that the barrier islands of what is now, in part, Roanoke Island were full of grapes and that the soil of the land was "so abounding with sweet trees that bring rich and most pleasant gummes, grapes of such greatness, yet wild, as France, Spain, nor Italy hath not greater..."; and

Whereas, Sir Walter Raleigh's colony discovered the famous Scuppernong "Mother Vineyard" on Roanoke Island, a vine that

is now over 400 years old and has a trunk over two feet thick; and Whereas, the State toast, penned in 1904, references North Carolina as the land "[w]here the scuppernong perfumes the breeze at night,"; and

## Part III. The Strawberry And The Blueberry.

Whereas, there are over 1,700 acres of strawberries and over 3,600 acres of blueberries harvested in North Carolina each year; and

Whereas, in 2000, strawberry growers in the State produced 23,000,000 pounds of strawberries, yielding \$17,325,000 in revenues;; and

Whereas, in 2000, blueberry growers in the State produced 17,500,000 pounds of blueberries, resulting in an increase in the State's economy of over \$18,000,000 in revenues; and

Whereas, these delicious berries are a good source of vitamins, a number of life-sustaining minerals, and dietary fiber;

Whereas, the blueberry is an antioxidant, which has been proven to reduce cholesterol and lower the risk of heart disease; and

Whereas, each year the Town of Chadbourn in Columbus County hosts the North Carolina Strawberry Festival, which is one of the most celebrated traditions in the State; and

Whereas, the State of North Carolina does not have an official fruit nor an official berry; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Chapter 145 of the General Statutes is amended by

adding a new section to read:

**“§ 145-18. State fruit and State berries.**

(a) The official fruit of the State of North Carolina is the Scuppernong grape (*Vitis* genus).

(b) The official red berry of the State is the strawberry (*Fragaria* genus)

**SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 5th day of December, 2001.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue, President of the Senate

s/ James B. Black, Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley, Governor

Approved 6:58 p.m. this 16th day of December, 2001

**An Act Adopting The Official Fruit and Berries of North Carolina**

<https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/SessionLaws/HTML/2001-2002/SL2001-488.html>

## The Mother Vine(yard) As It Was and Is

This document began, a long time ago, as a transcription of and homage to Professor Etheridge's monograph on the Mother Vineyard.

Hence, I first present the only complete transcription of his monograph to be made available to the general public. After that, you see and read many articles about the Mother Vine and vineyard, presented in chronological order based on their particular subject matter.

# The Mystery of Mother Vineyard

William C. Etheridge, University of Missouri

*As of 2021-12, asked permission some time ago. Asked again now.*

Unpublished manuscript held by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27514 United States. No copyright claimed. A photocopy of this manuscript was provided to the editor November, 2011 by Sarah Downing, then Assistant Curator at the Outer Banks History Center, Manteo NC. Many thanks to her for a gracious and educational tour of the back of house.

Typescript marked in handwriting: Dare County Library, Manteo, N. C.

<https://www.worldcat.org/title/mystery-of-mother-vineyard/oclc/190859280> lists “The mystery of Mother Vineyard” as:

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill, NC 27514 United States

Genre/Form: History

Material Type: Manuscript

Document Type: Book, Archival Material

All Authors / Contributors: William C Etheridge

OCLC Number: 190859280

Notes: Caption title. Typescript. Mother Vineyard is a “native white grape vine centuries old” that is located on Roanoke Island, N.C.

Description: 19 leaves; 28 cm

Responsibility: William C. Etheridge. [sic]

*Editor's note: In the following, footnotes and underlining are as Dr. Etheridge typed them.*

*This is, to the best of my knowledge, the only available digital text of Dr. Etheridge's complete essay. I have taken every care to reproduce the text exactly as typed, but cannot guarantee perfect accuracy.*

*His work is widely quoted in bits and pieces; now, here's the whole thing!*

## I

Come ashore at the right place on the north end of Roanoke Island, walk 40 long paces up the sandy bank that is part of the western rim of Roanoke sound, and you will be looking at Mother Vineyard, a native white grapevine centuries old. An easier way would have been by one of the fine roads that traverse the island; but the vine is a romantic and revered object and you should approach it with the imagination and respect due its dignity as the oldest living thing on the island and one of the oldest living fruit plants on earth. Indeed a long time ago all who came from afar to see it had to take the water route, for that was the only course of travel.

The main parts of the old vineyard are simple. Five trunks stand in wide ordered ranks, a sign of careful planting. Each trunk is twisted into a fantastic shape so big around that a man cannot span it with his arms. Overhead is a scaffold bearing the dense growth of vines.

To see more you must first listen to the music around you. It will be the south'ardly wind whispering among the myriad leaves of the old vine, the gentle purling of wavelets caressing the low white shore, the timeless drums of the surf on distant Nag's Head; all drifting in quiet symphony with the haunting melody of a long gone violin.

Now look at the vine again. The huge trunks have become a group of venerable giants at work, standing waist-deep in the sandy earth from whose eerie recess they draw their primal strength. Their great knotted arms hold towards the sun an acre-broad canopy of leaves that by green magic absorb the sunlight and air and transmute all into god-like fruit for wine which is nectar. Talk to yourself now and here is what you may say: "I am seeing a thing of great age, perhaps of immeasurable age, a mysterious living relic

of the long, long ago. What was the origin of this vine? When? Where? Who first cultured it?" The answers are in the deep past, and only some of them can be brought into focus.

## II

The natural origin of a plant species can seldom be traced through the long evolution which developed it. Time of origin in particular may as well be left among the inscrutables. Place of origin can sometimes be reckoned with a degree of reason if the present known climactic adaptation of the species is limited. Judgment on the point, however, can be only tentative because of the possibility that changes in the plant wrought by the hand of man or by slow modifications of the climate have localized the species or on the contrary have spread it beyond the limits of an earlier zone. From these broad considerations we may think further of the place of origin, the discovery and the early culture of the Scuppernong (white) grape which is Mother Vineyard.

The Scuppernong variety, noted for its delicious flavor, vigor, and longevity, is the most important member of the Muscadine group (*Vitis rotundifolia*). Muscadine are now broadly adapted to the sandy soil and mild humid climate of the coastal strip from southeastern Virginia to Texas. Natural conditions for their successful growth elsewhere are infrequent. Muscadine varieties, including especially the Scuppernong, are more numerous and abundant in eastern North Carolina than in other places; the vines there are larger and are often known to have lived to a greater age in undiminished yield. These facts indicate the North Carolina coastal area as the environment to which the Muscadines are generally best suited, and further they are presumptive evidence that this was the place in which these grapes first reached a stage of natural development comparable with their present forms. Such a

phase must have occurred at a time too remote for even a guess of the approximate period.

### III

The first recorded instance of the Muscadines in North Carolina is drawn from the reports of explorers sent to America by Sir Walter Raleigh late in the sixteenth century. Captains Amadas and Barlowe, commanding Raleigh's first expedition, reached Roanoke Island early in July, 1584. On the Island and at other points of a brief survey a "wondrous profusion" of grapes gave these voyagers a vivid impression of natural plenty in the new land.

"The land...so full of grapes, as the very beating and surge of the Sea overflowed them...I think in all the world the like abundance is not to be found: and my selfe having seene those parts of Europe that most abound." Indians on Roanoke Island, Amadas and Barlowe said, made grape wine but lacked good containers for keeping it.

Raleigh's second expedition, under Sir Richard Grenville, landed on Roanoke Island in mid-summer, 1585. Grenville after a short stay resumed his freebooting, leaving Ralph Lane and 107 men to explore the country. Lane established a fort and garrison headquarters on the north end of the Island, and for nearly a year used it as the base from which he searched a broad contiguous area—southward 80 miles, northward 130 miles, northwestward 150 miles. He seems to have been trying to find metals and pearls and gave only passing attention to plants, though he notes the grapes were "Of such greatnesse, yet wilde, as France, Spain nor Italie have no greater." He also mentions wine-making by the Indians.

Fortunately a member of Lane's company did observe and record particularly the plants, both wild and cultivated, as well as the birds, beasts and fish, found on the Island and the nearby lands and

waters. He was Thomas Harriott, Raleigh's trusted man, a natural scientist and philosopher, who must have been charged to bring back an accurate report of what he saw. Of grapes on the island he noted "divers kindes" and grouped them broadly as "Two kindes that the soile doth yeeld naturally, the one is small and sowre, of the ordinary bignesse of ours in England, the other farre greater and of himselfe lushious sweete." Harriott like the others paid his respects to the grape wine and listed it as one of the principal commodities for future development.

And so by historical evidence Muscadine grapes were abundantly indigenous to Roanoke Island and roundabout nearly 400 years ago. Moreover, they were already in various forms and surpassing quality; and this is a strong indication of their selective improvement by the aborigines through a long previous period.

The question whether the grapes found by the explorers were muscadines may be answered by the facts (1) that in this section the Muscadine is still the only grape which profusely grows wild, and (2) that under cultivation this species is the kind still best adapted there. If there is also a question of the probability that the Indians had improved their grapes long before Raleigh's explorers found of them, let us look for the answer in the Indian necessities of life, especially their highly developed agriculture.

### IV

Indians along the North Carolina coast were a highly intelligent people whose design of living was centered on the production and procurement of food. Their wide knowledge of plants and their artful proficiency in growing them are points of special comment by nearly all explorers and many early settlers. Indian agriculture at its best, before it had been broken by white men, was studied by Thomas Harriott, on Roanoke Island 1585-87. This chronicler, a

member of Raleigh's second and fourth expeditions to Roanoke, saw in Indian fields and woods many vegetables and fruits familiar in England. Some of the varieties differed from those he had known but all were of good quality, he says. Crop plants totally new to him were corn, tobacco and, to judge by his descriptions, both kinds of potatoes.

The original habitats of all these plants and the time required to bring them into useful productivity are not subjects of this discussion. It is a truism that all species now cultivated have been developed from the wild partly by natural changes and partly by improvement at the hand of man.

Indian methods of growing corn and of improving the plant for their use are illuminating. Harriet relates that the Roanoke Indians developed their varieties for successive maturity—early, medium, late—through the long local season, and further had fixed a wide range of colors marking the different types. The corn was carefully planted in check rows (equidistant hills) and kept very clean. Indians farther north along the coast are noted by other historians to have fertilized their corn with fish, to have treated the fields with lime burnt from shells, and to have made an ingenious germination test of the seed corn. Harriet either missed the observation of these practices among the Roanoke Indians or thought them not worth recording.

It is reasonable to consider that the Indians applied their knowledge and skill to the production and improvement of many other plants besides corn. Evidence of this are the abundant yields, the wide variety of kinds, and the excellent quality, all noted by the explorers. Muscadine grapes are highly responsive to improvement by selection and to cultural treatment. Almost certainly the Indians chose the best wild grapes from the profusion in the woods, set them in their clearings, and cultured them for better growth and productivity. When the clearing as a whole was farmed out

it was abandoned to natural growth and a new clearing opened. These procedures could and perhaps did go on indefinitely, and in the course of time they could become a basic cause for improvement among all grapes, especially within a physically limited area, such as Roanoke Island surrounded by water. Such development, however, is not supposed to have been localized. Wild grapes were everywhere and so were Indians, and improvement in one place doubtless was eventually paralleled in others.

It is suggested that the Indian method for increasing the yield of grapes was simply to set the vines in open places, spacing them uniformly and providing a scaffold to hold them off the ground. Obviously the Indians knew the good effect of equidistant spacing, for that was the way they planted their corn; and drawings by John White, Governor of Raleigh's colony, show that the scaffold was a common device among them.

The different varieties of fine grapes, noted by Lane and Harriott, and by John Lawson, Crown Surveyor of North Carolina (1700-08), must reasonably be credited partly to Indian intelligence in the selection of superior forms. No other explanation of such development seems adequate. Lawson's descriptions include at least six varieties, different in color but fixed in type, and all excellent in quality. The white grapes, Lawson says, were less frequent than the others because young shoots of the white varieties were favorite browse for cattle and deer, and many of the vines were thus destroyed. All kinds, however, were plentiful.

From the foregoing it is clear: (1) Roanoke Indians possessed a wide knowledge of plants and were artful farmers, (2) comments of explorers indicate grapes as the principal Indian fruit, known and used so long that the making of grape wine had become common, (3) the island Indians knew and practiced the art of plant selection as exemplified by their use of it in the improvement of their corn, and (4) they knew the efficiency of equidistant plantings, also

practiced with corn.

These facts add up to a probability that the Indians did culture and improve their Muscadine grapes. On that basis it may be reasonably surmised that Indian vineyards or single vines were planted in many places in eastern North Carolina, and Mother Vineyard may be tentatively accepted as one of these plantings until other possibilities of its beginning are examined.

What became of the Indian vines after the clearings had grown up in woods, and the Indians themselves, more and more after 1660 (circa), had withdrawn to other areas? Lawson's statement, previously mentioned, that the white Muscadines were favorite browse for cattle and deer, indicates that many of the vines were destroyed in that way. Some of the others doubtless were found by settlers and became in situ features of early homesteads. This may have been the "civilized" introduction of Mother Vineyard. Still other vines, crowded by the woods and thus held to small growth, were eventually found, dug up and reset on homesteads. The last conjecture may explain the occasional discoveries of fine varieties in eastern North Carolina woods during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

But was Mother Vineyard an Indian vine? Who instead of the Indians might have planted it?

## V

The possibility that Raleigh's explorers (1584-86) planted grape vines, such as Mother Vineyard, seems very dim. Amadas and Barlowe under the urge of a quick survey spent only a few weeks in the whole area including Roanoke Island before hurrying back to England with news of their discoveries. Grenville's stay was even shorter. Neither of them had time or reason for planting vines, and no word in their chronicles suggests such an incident.

But Grenville, as told before, left Ralph Lane and his men on the Island with orders to explore intensively as much of the surrounding country as they could reach. Lane before setting out detailed a few men to keep the island fort and produce food. It is recorded they "sowed, planted and set" towards a two-year supply, especially of corn. Lane had much bad luck on his survey, and in less than a year he and all his men were glad to embark with Sir Francis Drake, who at that time touched into these waters.

It seems most unlikely that grape vines were included among the things sowed, planted and set by Lane's Island garrison. The men must have known that young vines could not come into bearing for several years, and they must have seen in the woods enough grapes for casual use.

As it is clearly possible, however, that Raleigh's colony, which came to the Island in 1587, the year following Lane's departure, did plant vines as an item in their preparation for settled living. This company under Governor John White numbered 91 men, 17 women, and 9 children. Here was the nucleus for a very considerable number of families, with more expected from England if the venture was successful. One of their first constructive acts must have been the allotment of land for home sites. Equitable division of the acreage, allowing for some freedom of choice and holding some land in reserve for later arrivals, must soon have spread the allotments over much of the better land on Roanoke. Doubtless all the colonists at first used Lane's fort near the extreme north end of the island as common quarters but this arrangement must have been viewed as only temporary if most of them were to develop even small subsistence farms, each with an acreage of supporting woodland. In fact one of Governor White's first orders was for the repair of houses left by Lane and the building of others.

If the Roanoke colony may be assumed to have begun the improvement of home sites, before its tragic ending so well recorded

in history, one of the finest natural accessions would have been a grape vine on the premises, just as it is on Roanoke today. The vines were easily dug up in the woods and transplanted. Such may have been the cultural beginning of Mother Vineyard.

This consideration of the old vine is supported by two facts: (1) the obvious great age of the trunks, and (2) the apparent certainty that the tract on which they stand was used by some of White's company. Verification of the latter is found in White's report of his return to Roanoke after an absence of about three years.

It is historical that soon after White had landed his colonists on Roanoke, July 1587, he departed for England to bring back needed supplies. England was then at war with Spain, ships could not be spared for colonial relief, and it was not until August 1590 that White again reached the Island. His approach met trouble. Putting off in small boats from his ships anchored off the mouth of an inlet southeast of Roanoke, he swamped one of his craft and seven of the men in it were drowned. This so delayed him that he reached the Island after nightfall. The description of his landing is here briefly extracted from his chronicle.

“Before we could get to the place where our planters were left it was so...darke that we overshot the place a quarter of a mile: there we espied towards the north end of the Iland ye light of a great fire thorow the woods, to the which we presently rowed: when we came right over against it...we sounded with a trumpet...and familiar English songs...and called...but we had no answers...We landed at daybreak and coming to the fire we found grass...and trees burning...From hence we went thorow the woods to that part of the Iland directly over against Dasamongwepeuk\* and from thence we returned by the water side round about the north point of the Iland untill we came to the place where I left our colony.”

\* This would put them on the Croatan Sound side of the north end of the Island.

White's outline of his course is explicit to anyone familiar with the north end shoreline of Roanoke Island. If he overshot by a quarter of a mile the place where he had left his planters, and from that point saw the light of a fire on the north end, his intended landfall, missed in the dark, was approximately the tract of shore on which Mother Vineyard now stands. Early the next morning he went to the place round about the north point of the Island where he had left his colony.

White plainly makes a distinction between the locations of the planters and the rest of the colony. Before he left in 1587 to bring supplies from England he may quite reasonably have chosen the planters and assigned them to the production of food on the lower and more fertile land about two miles south of the colony center at Lane's fort on the extreme north end. We must assume that White, an educated and conscientious man, carefully said what he meant, because he was reporting the sorrowful conclusion of his great mission.

For he had lost his whole colony, as further search that same day revealed. They were not only gone—they were so long gone that rust and mold and decay had all but reduced their abandoned chattels to the common earth. And all knowledge of their fate is still beyond the dark curtain.

But in the whole dim tragedy of the Lost Colony we may discern the possibility that White's “planters” were the original culturists of Mother Vineyard and maybe other vines on the Island. One who weighs the circumstances just related can scarcely refuse that consideration. Some of the planters were located on the Mother Vineyard tract, and they had a strong motive for setting vines. Their opportunity in time, however, was very limited. It may have ended soon after White's departure for supplies, if we may judge by the advanced state of ruin in which he found their personal effects upon his return.

## VI

Following the exit of Raleigh's colony no white men are known to have entered the Roanoke Island scene for the next sixty years, although a French or Spanish mariner may by chance have put in to supply a brief necessity. In 1654, however, Francis Yardley, presumably a relative of a former governor of the Virginia colony, sent a few English workmen to build a house for the Indian chief of the Island, this in fulfillment of an agreement made a year earlier when Yardley touched the section during a search for furs.

By 1660 the movement of settlers from Virginia to the Albemarle section of North Carolina had well begun. The exact date when the first of these reached Roanoke is not known but certainly a population had been established there before the end of the century. The first title to the land which includes the site of Mother Vineyard was granted to Peter Baum. This was previous to 1729 for in 1732 Peter paid his arrears on His Majesty's quit rent from 1729, amounting to 4 pounds, 9 shillings, 8 pence. The payment of this feudal tax is evidence of the Crown grant.

Peter Baum was of the first or second generation of a Baum family which owned and occupied the Mother Vineyard tract in unbroken succession from Peter's time until 1869 when the title passed to Chauncy Meekins who had married Mahala, a Baum daughter, late in the 1840's.

Peter Baum's origin is reasonably clear. He was among the remnants of the German-Swiss colony near Newberne, North Carolina, which had been broken and dispersed by Indians, 1711-12. The German members of this colony were from the Palatinate area of Germany, one of the principal grape-growing sections of Europe. The date of Peter's arrival on Roanoke cannot be narrowly drawn. Time required for difficult travel from the site of the ruined Newberne colony to the Island, time for finding the land he wanted,

and time for acquiring a royal grant to it, must have taken him a number of years. Moreover, he may have owned the land for years before he got in arrears with his payments of feudal obligations. Perhaps it is reasonable to put him on Roanoke as early as 1715-20. From Peter the direct descending generations of Baums who possessed and lived on the Mother Vineyard tract were represented by Maurice Baum I, Abraham Baum, Maurice Baum II, Solomon Baum and his sister Mahala.

From a general view the Baums could be given precedence over all others as the propagators of Mother Vineyard. Setting grape vines on their premises would have been completely in the Baum character, for they were industrious and thrifty people, apt in the improvement of property. Peter Baum probably understood grape culture—he had migrated from a commercial grape country; and he must soon have noticed that Roanoke woods were full of fine varieties. Two incontestable facts, however, bar the Baum priority: (1) the vine is too old to have been set by even Peter Baum, and (2) apparently none of the Baums knew who had set it—they knew only who owned it. But they are known to have wondered about it.

Solomon Baum (1813-98) an able man with an inquiring mind, in particular wondered. He often told the father and uncle of the author\* that the vine had not changed during his lifetime; that in his old age it looked the same as when he was a boy; that his father Maurice Baum II (1772-1839) and his grandfather Abraham Baum (1742-1833) had told him that the trunks were big and old from their earliest recollection and during their lives had not changed. Solomon was a man not easily turned from the answers he wanted and the puzzle of the vine "worried" him.

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\* A seventh generation direct descendant of Peter Baum, on the maternal side. He was born on the Mother Vine homestead and has known the vine intimately all his life.

An odd echo of the voice of Abraham Baum is lately quoted by Mr. John C. Bragaw in the October 1947 issue of The State, a North Carolina magazine. Mr. Bragaw draws from The North Carolina Reader (1858) the following reference to Mother Vineyard, by “a roving reporter”: “The first vine of this name (Scuppernong) was found near...the banks of Scuppernong River...by some of the party composing the first Anglo-Saxon settlement on Roanoke Island...One small vine...was transplanted very soon on Roanoke Island, where, only a few years since I saw it...and was told by old Abraham Baum, then 84 years old, that when he was a boy the vine was the largest on the Island.”

The boyhood of Abraham Baum, born 1742, was in the late 1740's and early 1750's. If Mother Vineyard so long ago could have been described in such terms as “big and old” and “largest on the Island,” it obviously was too far advanced in age to have been set by the earliest of the Baums. Peter Baum could scarcely have obtained his grant to the land before 1715; indeed a later date is likely. So at most there was a period of only some 35 years for the trunks to have reached the stage described by Abraham. Scuppernong vines do not grow so fast nor so early develop their peculiar appearance of twisted old age. Moreover, if the vine had been planted by the Baums, the old generations of the family would have known it, for the vine was a conspicuous feature of their ancestral homestead. They didn't know it. Almost certainly the Baums did not plant Mother Vineyard.

## VII

The curious tradition that Mother Vineyard was transplanted as a single young vine from the Scuppernong River section of Tyrrell County has no substance, though several writers have given it a degree of credence. Like many other traditions it is readily dispelled

by facts, if you like facts.

In the first place Mother Vineyard is not a single vine; it is five vines, from five different trunks, the fruit of each differing from that of the others in flavor and in shade of color. Reasonably none of the pre-colony explorers would have bothered to carry grape vines from Scuppernong River to Roanoke Island. Amadas and Barlowe hadn't time, as indicated earlier in this article. Lane had enough time but the deeper he explored northwest of Roanoke the deeper grew his trouble. He and his men were continually in grave danger of massacre by the Indians and of starvation. It is difficult to credit them with any interest in transplanting grapes. The colonists under John White didn't do it: they must have lacked time and inclination for the laborious 120 mile round trip from Roanoke to the Scuppernong River in the small boats at hand; they must have known that the Indians in the whole northwestern direction had already been aroused to hostility by Lane and his argonauts; and since they left no record of themselves or of anything they did, there is no room at all for tradition on the point.

Any grape vines set by the colonists must have come from the Island woods. The clear possibility of such planting has been shown. No reason for hunting grape vines elsewhere. Several delicious varieties of Muscadines—white grapes (Scuppernong) as well as the darker colored varieties—are as indigenous there as the pine and myrtle, though less numerous.

Perhaps the tradition connecting the origin of Mother Vineyard with the Scuppernong River arose in the early 1800's when white Muscadine varieties and strains were first widely narrated to be especially abundant in the River section. It was reasonable enough to give the names Scuppernong to these varieties. It is not reasonable, however, to conclude that all Scuppernong grapes had a narrow and prior genesis somewhere along the Scuppernong River. As lately as sixty years ago the Island grapes were not known as

Scuppernong; they were simply called white grapes!

Biologically we are on much stronger ground if we assume that the Scuppernong forms developed slowly and at about the same time over a broad and relatively homogeneous area in northeastern North Carolina and possibly farther south. On this basis the questions of priority as to place and age of one vine or another have no positive answers. No one can designate with assurance the oldest living Scuppernong. And of course the oldest may not yet have lived as long as did some of the dead.

Mother Vineyard being put beyond the Baum family is at least 233 years old; probably it is much older than that. The author believes that the Indians planted these vines. None of the other possible propagators seems to fit so well all conditions of time, place, opportunity, motive, and intimate knowledge of the plant. The time of planting must have been long before the coming of the Baums, estimated at 1715-20, for Indian agriculture had been thoroughly broken up and the Indians mostly dispersed from Roanoke several decades before these years. The earliest Baums on clearing the land, grown up in woods or thicket after the Indians had abandoned it, found the vines, and in their own thrifty way they saved and tended them, and passed them on to a wondering posterity.

Approximately the date of the Indian planting could be anybody's guess. Mother Vineyard may be twice as old as the factual records of it. And there is the lingering possibility that the vine was set by John White's Planters in 1587.

Well, how old is Mother Vineyard? Is it the oldest living Scuppernong vine? The author doesn't know, but he would go a long way to see a vine that can be proved older by such historical circumstances as surround Mother Vineyard. Why was this vine named Mother Vineyard? The author doesn't know that either; perhaps the name just grew, as names of old things do grow, such as Father of Waters for the Mississippi River. For known centuries

Mother Vineyard has given bounty, and probably for unknown centuries too. It still yields abundantly and no one can foretell its final decay. It is a mystery in precise origin and in longevity. If once while looking at the great twisted trunks you happen to hear the drums and wild harp strings of a brawling sou'wester, you may wonder whether the old vine is under bond to grow grapes for the wine-press of the immortals.

The following references have been freely used in the preparation of this article:

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Phillips, Ullrich B. Life and Labor in the Old South, 1929.

Dearing, Charles. Muscadine Grapes. Farmer's Bul 1785, U.S. Dept. Agr., 1947.

Reimer, F. C. Origin and Importance of the Scuppernong and Other Muscadine Grapes. Bul. 201, N. C. Agr. Expt. Sta., 1909.

Stuckey, H. P. Muscadine Grape Varieties and Culture. Circ. 94, Ga. Agr. Expt. Sta., 1931.

Documents and records of the Baum family, in possession of the author.

## DISTINGUISHED SON OF DARE DIES IN MISSOURI

Manteo, N. C., Friday, January 13, 1956 (No publication reference visible)



The death of Dr. William Carlyle Etheridge, 70 took place Saturday in Columbia, Mo., where he had been connected with the State University since 1916. He was the husband of the late Mrs. Fannie Cassell Etheridge and the son of Daniel Warren and Humantla Meekins Etheridge of Roanoke Island, where he was born June 30, 1885. Dr. Etheridge started on his college career with funds saved while fishing shad nets

near Wanchese, and by his savings and his labor, worked his way through State College, Raleigh, graduating with a B. S. degree in 1906. He got his masters degree at Cornell University in 1912 and his doctor's degree in 1915. The children of his marriage with Fannie Cassell were William Roger, Edward Bruce, David Carrell, Daniel Warren and Fannie Elizabeth. This [sic] wife died several years ago, and in September last he married Miss Helen Averitt of Missouri, who survive [s him? Text missing in photocopy.]

Dr. Etheridge was a recognized authority on field crops, and the author of several college text books on crops. He once taught at Cornell, and since 1915 had been Professor of Field Crops at Columbia. Since 1916 the Chairman of the Department. He was a member of many agricultural societies and college fraternities.

He is survived by his children herein named with the exception of Daniel Warren, who died some years ago; by two brothers, Ned Etheridge of Manteo and Norman Etheridge of Virginia Beach,

and a sister, Mrs. John D. O'Neal of Manteo.

He was a frequent visitor to Manteo, and until recently came several times a year to see his relatives, and to look after his real estate interests.

Funeral services and burial took place Monday in Columbia, Mo.

Dr. Etheridge was a man who came often, and who never forgot his homefolks, although he had been gone away for over 50 years. In a letter several years ago to the editor, he wrote:

"There hasn't been a day since I finally left Roanoke Island... when I haven't thought of somebody or something back home. As time goes on, my memory dwells more and more with sentimental impressions. In these mad days I like to think of the hard commonsense and poise of the old people there, who were of the generation before me. They were perfectly equipped to live in their environment, and although the times were often hard, the people were completely self-reliant and knew how to get along without help. I have not found elsewhere their equals in simple dignity, natural courtesy, silent courage, kindness and good humor. When the last of them are gone, there will be nobody else like them in the world. I shall not forget a single one of them as long as I live, and I am intensely proud of my origin among them."

*Retrieved from photocopy of obituary provided by Sarah Downing, Assistant Curator, Office of Archives and History, Division of Historical Resources; North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. Provided November, 2011.*

## William Carlyle Etheridge (1885-1956)

by T. R. Stanton

*From the National Oat Newsletter, volume 7, 1956:*

Dr. William Carlyle Etheridge, formerly Professor of Agronomy and retired Chairman of the Field Crops Department, College of Agriculture, University of Missouri, died on January 7, 1956 in the Boone County Hospital, Columbia, Missouri, from a heart attack suffered the previous day.

Dr. Etheridge was born at Hanteo [sic], North Carolina, June 30, 1885 and received the B.S. degree from North Carolina State College in 1906; and from Cornell University the M.S. degree in 1912; and the Ph.D. degree in 1915. He was an Assistant Agronomist at the Agricultural Experiment Station of North Carolina State College, 1906-1908; an Associate Agronomist in the same institution, 1908-1911; Assistant in Farm Crops, Cornell University, 1911-1915; Professor Agronomy, College of Agriculture, University of Florida, 1915-1916; and Professor Field Crops, College of Agriculture, University of Missouri, 1916-1955.

Aside from his outstanding accomplishments in the development of new crops and new crop varieties for Missouri and adjoining states and his nearly 40 years of research and teaching which brought him national recognition, this brief item is written primarily to give credit to him for his brilliant work on the classification of oats while a graduate student at Cornell University, the results of which were published in 1916 as Cornell Memoir No. 10, entitled "A Classification of the Varieties of Cultivated Oats," which constituted the first comprehensive report of this nature to appear in the United States. It antedated similar publications in both wheat and barley.

He studied 731 collections of oats and described 55 varieties

grouped under the three species, or subspecies, *Avena sterilis*, *A. sativa*, and *A. sativa orientalis*. Emphasis was placed on the purely botanical characters that made them varieties. Etheridge's work was a most valuable contribution to the botanical knowledge of oat varieties. In addition to this treatise, Dr. Etheridge has written numerous bulletins, circulars and journal articles on crops and related subjects and is the author of a textbook entitled "Field Crops," which has gone through several editions.

He was an active member and a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy, a member of Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma XI and the Botanical Society of America.

Dr. Etheridge is survived by his second wife, formerly Miss Helen Averitt, who had served as his secretary for many years, three sons and one daughter. His first wife who formerly was Miss Fanny Cassell, died shortly before his retirement. She deserves much credit as an artist for making the line drawings and color plates for Cornell Memoir No. 10.

*Retrieved from [https://oatnews.org/oatnews\\_pdfs/oatfame/HofF\\_obits\\_Etheridge.pdf](https://oatnews.org/oatnews_pdfs/oatfame/HofF_obits_Etheridge.pdf), 2019.*

## The Mother Vineyard and Baum Point

*Quoted from Currituck Legacy, The Baum Family of North Carolina. Elizabeth Baum Hanbury. 1985, no publisher or printer given. As of 2022, I have not been able to contact anyone who has copyright interests in this book. Please contact me if you do.*

One of the fascinating mysteries of Roanoke Island is the Mother Vineyard. With trunks so large that a man cannot span them with his arms, this still-productive Scuppernong grapevine stirs much speculation. Did the ancient, twisted trunks come from slips set out by the settlers of the Lost Colony? Perhaps it was planted by the Indians long before the white man came to Roanoke Island. Perchance the plants were natural growth and somewhere in time men cleared around them to aid their growth. One thing is certain: the Mother Vineyard is very, very old. It is probably the oldest living thing on Roanoke Island-and may be one of the oldest living things on all the earth.

Baum Point is at the northeast corner of Shallowbag Bay's juncture with Roanoke Sound. The Mother Vineyard is just north of Baum Point along the shore of the sound. The vineyard and point were part of the land acquired by Maurice Baum I in the mid-1700s.

...

When Maurice I died in 1784, he left his property to his two sons, Abraham and Maurice II. Only four children, the two sons and two daughters, survived Maurice I. Each of his two sons had large families.

Abraham married Sarah Mann, the daughter of Thomas and Hester Mann.

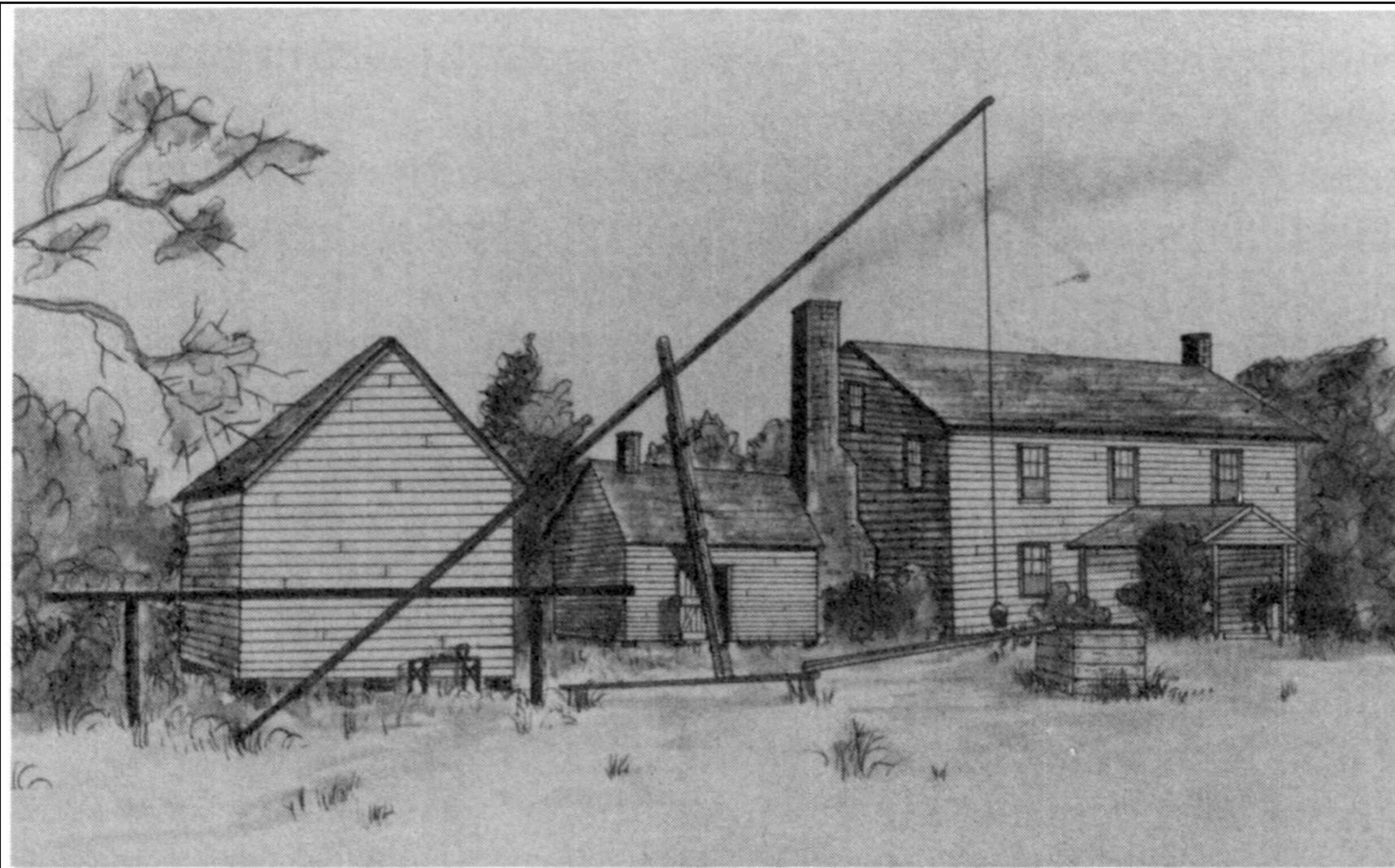
*Here there is in Hanbury's recounting, a slightly confusing nomenclature. After listing large numbers of other descendents of Maurice I she goes on to say...*

The Baum homestead where Abraham II lived stood near what now remains of the Mother Vineyard. The house had sheltered Maurice I and his family when son Abraham was growing up. Abraham and Sarah were the second generation to live there.

*I assume "Abraham II" is a mistake?*

Abraham and Sarah's son Maurice III (1772-1839) was, according to available records, their eldest son. Records often identify him with the variant Morris. Maurice III is used here to distinguish him from his grandfather Maurice I and his uncle Maurice II. In 1799 Maurice III married Ann Ashbee (variant Ashby), the daughter of Solomon Ashbee. Maurice III and Ann were the third generation of Baums who lived in the home by the Mother Vineyard. Theirs was a large family-five sons and seven daughters. Their youngest child, Mahala, married Isaac Chauncey Meekins. Mahala was twenty years old when her father died in 1839. She and her husband lived in the Baum home with her mother and it became known as the Meekins home. Dr. William C. Etheridge, a grandson of Mahala Baum Meekins, who was born in the old Baum-Meekins house in 1883, wrote the following description of it in 1948:

The house was three rooms deep at the end of each floor and two rooms deep in the middle making a total of fourteen rooms. A hall ran through the middle opening from the entrance of the "stoop." In addition there was a large kitchen at the left, joined to the house by a very deep cooking chimney which opened also into a big fireplace in the house. There was another big chimney at the other [south] end of the house. The house was alike on both sides.



*The Baum-Meekins House that stood next to the Mother Vineyard.*

*Hanbury gives no information on by whom or when this drawing was made. No photographs I have found show the kitchen or other structures than the crumbling old house, without a cover for the "stoop." So much is lost.*

## Virginia Dare, The White Doe

*Permission requested 2021-09-28; 2021-10-19; 2021-12-08. So far, no response. I assume they have no objections to inclusion here.*

*Editor's note: This article follows from a previous, at <https://northcarolinaghosts.com/coast/virginia-dare-white-doe/>. A precis:*

*A supposed old legend of North Carolina told the story of Virginia Dare, the first European born in an English colony in North America. When the colony was being destroyed by inimical Native Americans, some of the colonists escaped to a friendly tribe, and lived there the rest of their lives.*

*Beautiful young Virginia Dare was loved by two Native Americans, one of whom when his advances were rebuffed, magiced her into a white doe deer. The other suitor, Okisko, realized what had happened, and obtained a magic arrow that would break the spell. Meanwhile, the tribe's less perspicacious chief Wanchese vowed to kill the white doe to prove his prowess "as a warrior."*

*Of course, both suitor and chief found Virginia Dare and shot her at the exact same moment, thus returning her to her human self and killing her.*

*"Seeing what he had done, Wanchese fled the island in fear, but Okisko sadly carried the body of his beloved to the old fort built by the colonists and buried her at its center.*

*"But soon by that pool where Virginia Dare died, a new vine sprung up, whose grapes were sweeter than any that anyone had tasted before, but whose juice was a red as blood. This was the scuppernong, the grape from which the first North Carolina wines were made."*

*Except that Scuppernongs are white, not red.*

### Virginia Dare, the White Doe

<https://northcarolinaghosts.com/coast/virginia-dare-white-doe/scary-truth/>

While the exact fate of the Lost Colony is unknown, most historians agree that the chances of Virginia Dare having been transformed into a deer are vanishingly small. But the legend of Virginia Dare does represent a unique combination of a literary tradition that was imported to the New World from England, along with some uniquely American advertising showmanship.

The story of Virginia Dare's transformation into a deer seems to have been first told in the late 19th Century. The earliest versions of the story, such as the one recorded in an 1880 travel article in the *New York Times*, leave out the grapes and even the Indians entirely. In these versions, Virginia Dare is a deer with a remarkably long lifespan, and is eventually brought down by a silver bullet shot from a Virginia hunter's rifle in the 19th Century.

But these first versions of the story are already drawing from an established literary tradition. The White Deer is a common motif in English literary legends and is often used as a symbol of Christian virtue. A similar story of a young girl transformed into a white deer can be found in Yorkshire, where it formed the basis for Wordsworth's poem "The White Deer of Rylstone."

The author of the most famous version of the Virginia Dare story was certainly aware of this tradition. This is the version of the story whose summary you've just read,\* which comes from Sallie Southall Cotten's 1901 book-length poem *The White Doe, or the Fate of Virginia Dare*.

Sallie Southall Cotten was a remarkable woman, a strong

\* See precis, on left.

promoter of women's rights and a leader in the women's club movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. An organizer of the North Carolina exhibition at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, it was she who commissioned the beautifully carved Virginia Dare desk that illustrates scenes from the legend and is now on display at the Lost Colony Museum in Roanoke Festival Park.

Cotten was also an early advocate of North Carolina's wine industry, and the addition of the scuppernong grapes colored by Virginia Dare's blood was her contribution to the legend. This was probably because *The White Doe* was written to sell scuppernong wine.

Before prohibition, North Carolina was one of the leading wine manufacturing states in the country, an industry that is now only slowly creeping back to being an important one for the state. The leading light in this industry was Garrett & Company, whose line of scuppernong wines were among the most popular blends of wine in America. That line was called Virginia Dare wines.

Distributing Cotten's book was part of an innovative and aggressive marketing campaign by Garret & Company to promote those scuppernong blends named for the lost colonist. Garret & Co. wanted to build the brand recognition for their sweet wines, as well as expand the appeal of their wines to women. They thought that a romantic, patriotic story was just the thing to encourage women to drink more cheap wine, and so they commissioned the poem from Ms. Cotten and gave the book away with bottles of their wine. Tying the legend of Virginia Dare in with a romantic origin myth for the scuppernong grape was entirely Sallie Southall Cotten's invention. As for the poem itself, while Cotten's style might be seen as stilted to modern eyes, the poem could probably easily hold its own against any other book-length poems advertising wine.

Ms. Cotten's legend has outlasted the memory of its origins as an advertising campaign, and even outlasted the wine itself.



“While within its bright'ning dimness,  
With the misty halo 'round her,  
Stood a beautiful white maiden”

Page 70

Although Virginia Dare wines were the first wines advertised on radio, and the tagline in their advertisements, “Say it again — Virginia Dare,”\* was heard often enough during the 1920s to become one of the first famous radio catchphrases, prohibition was a blow from which Garet & Company never recovered.

When the ban on alcohol sales was lifted in 1929, Virginia Dare wines were the first American-made wines that were once again commercially available. But the company never regained its former glory. Garret & Company folded in the 1950s. But some of the last bottles of Virginia Dare wine made in the late 1940s have a possible connection to another, very different, American legend. These bottles are a much sought-after item by collectors, due to unverified rumors that the model posing for the portrait of Virginia Dare on the label was a young Marilyn Monroe.\*\*

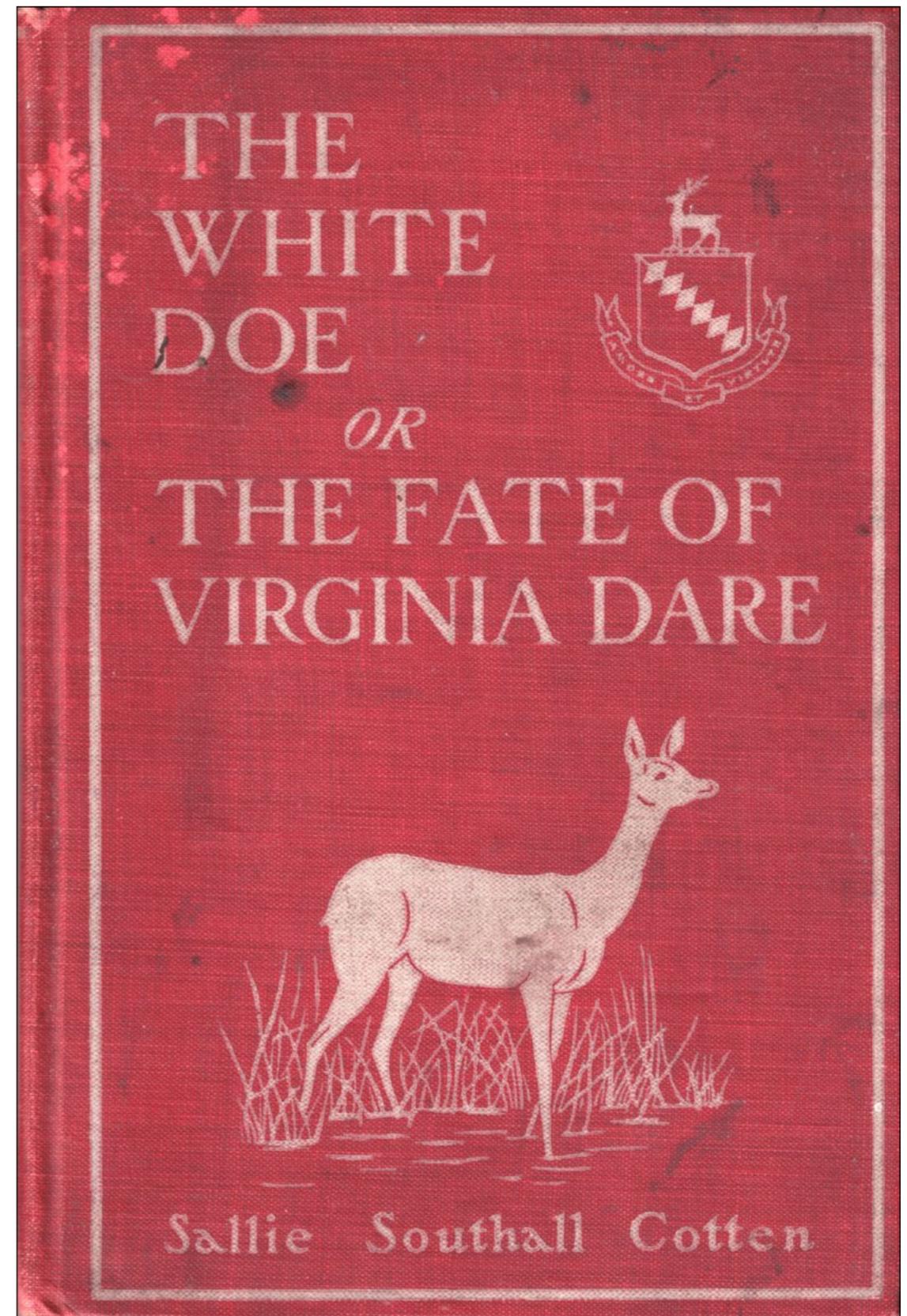


\* Can't find the jingle anywhere.

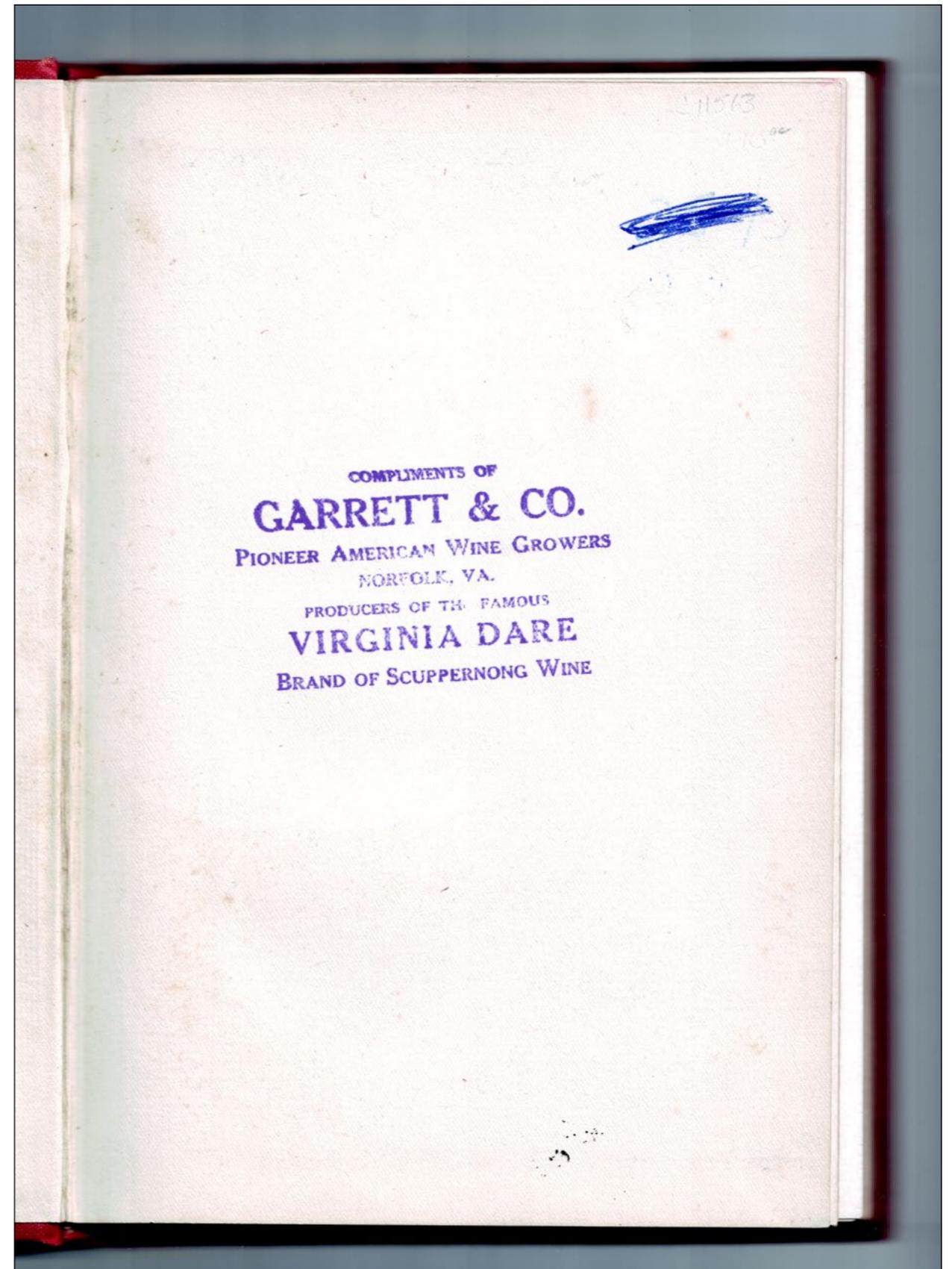
\*\* Marilyn Monroe; born Norma Jeane Mortenson; June 1, 1926, would have been about 20 years old in “the late 1940s.”

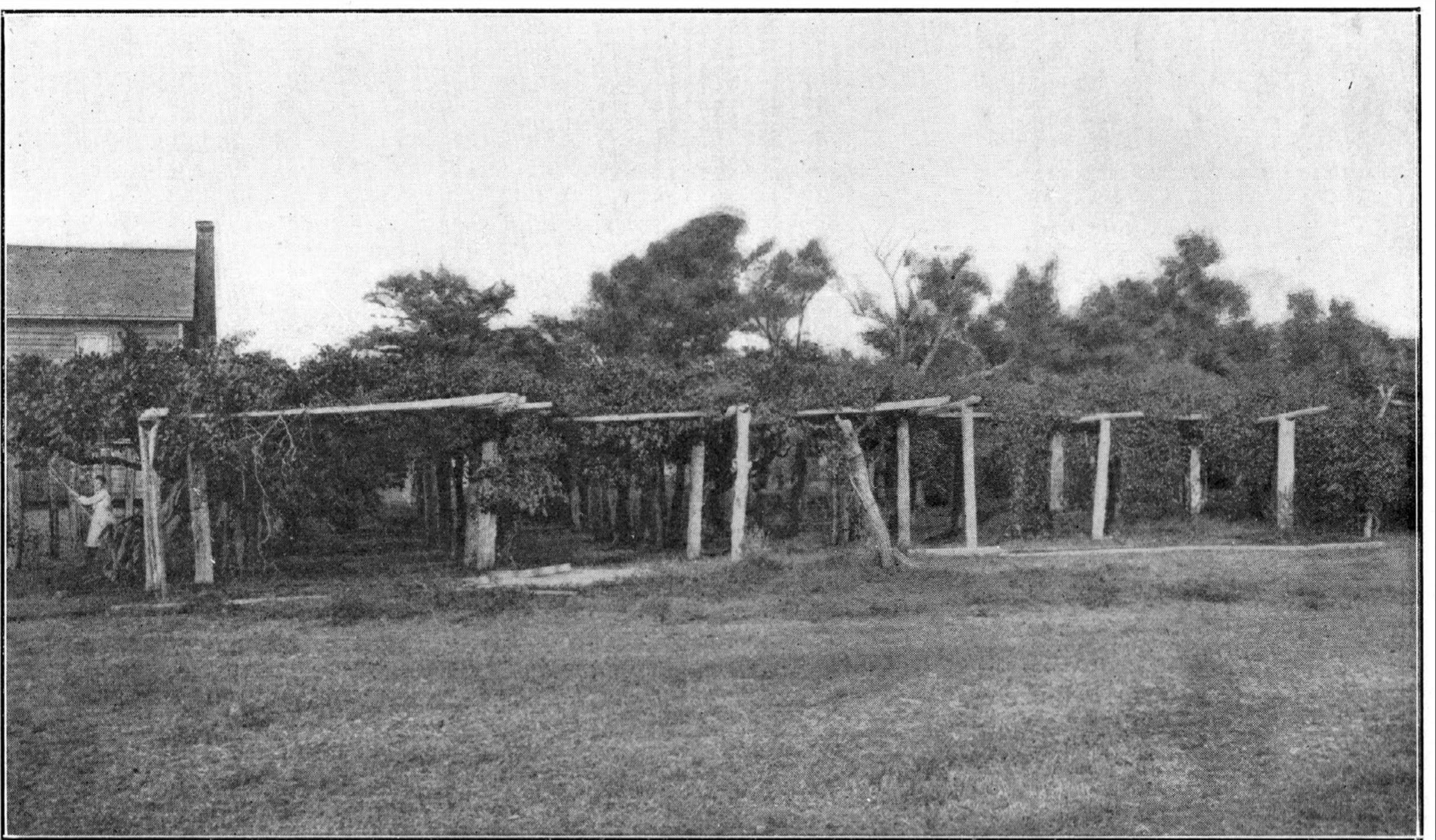
*On this and the following pages, a few scans from my copy of the book.*

*My scanner is not good enough to truly do justice to the originals, which are themselves not of high quality. But I hope you enjoy very early pictures of the Mother Vine(yard). Noting that the few shown here must have been taken before 1901, the copyright date of the book.*



*Flyleaf, with rubber stamp of the provenience of the book.*





A Scuppernong Vineyard, Roanoak Island.

*Previous page:*

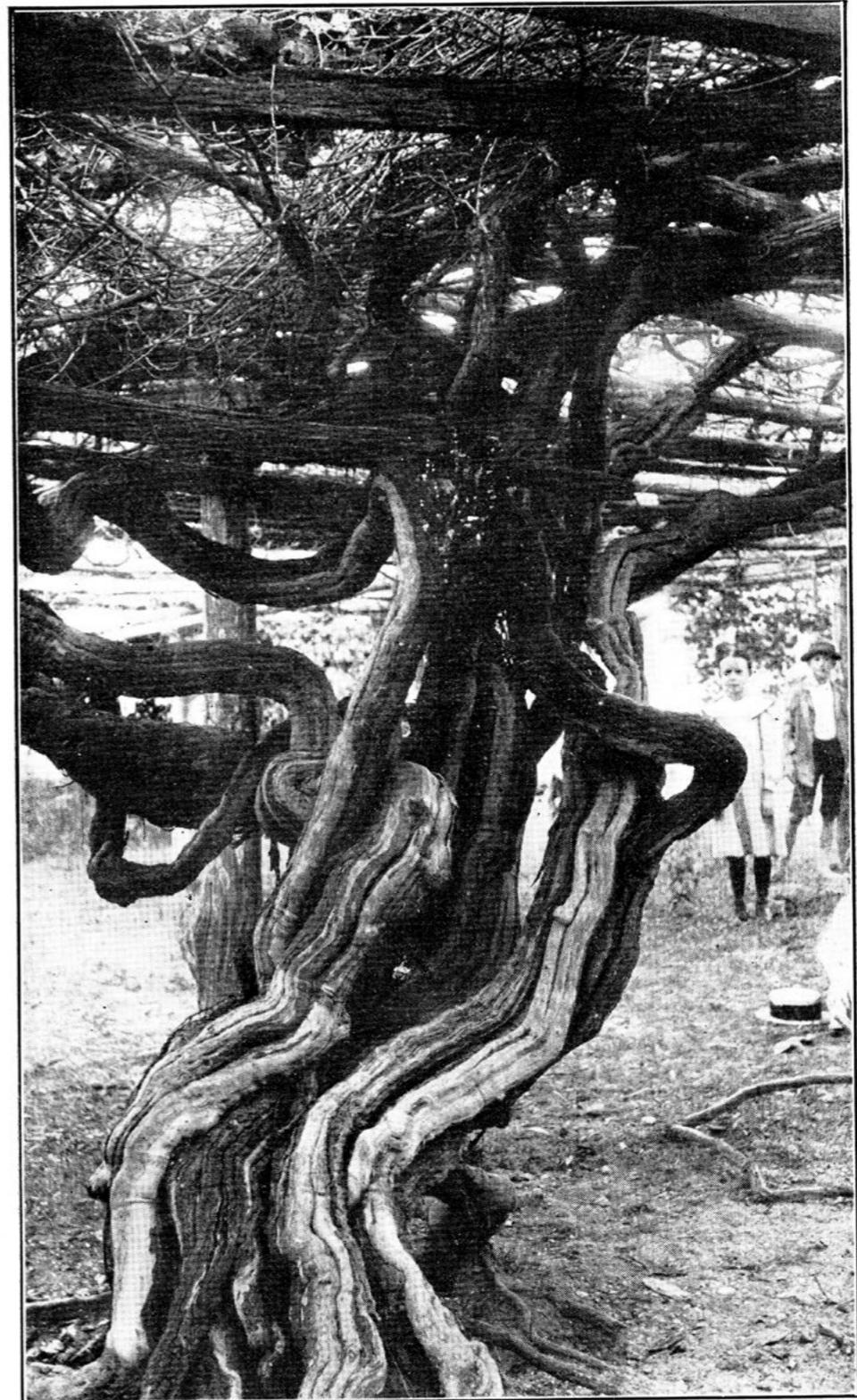
*Page xi. Note that the description is “ ‘A’ Scuppernong Vineyard...,” as if one among many. But we can be fairly sure it’s the Mothervine(yard), from the house in the background.*

*Who, we wonder, is in the swing in the lower left?*



*Page xiii*

*This time, The “Mother” vine is identified as such.  
The girl in the background must be the one who was swinging.  
Is that her brother in the hat?*



Old “Mother” Scuppernong Vine.

## Mother Vine(yard) Historical Photos and Notes

*An eclectic collection of pictures of the Mother Vine(yard) from various sources. Not all of them have definite information on when the photos were taken. When available, that information is included on the page after the photograph.*



Previous page:

Photo Courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Object Name Photograph

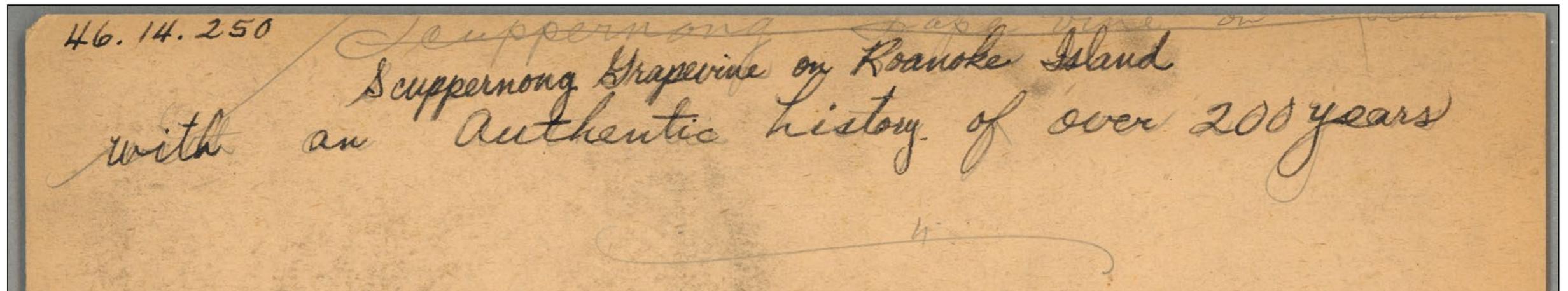
Catalog Number H.1946.14.250

Artist/Maker HILL, DANIEL HARVEY, JR. USED BY--ROANOKE ISLAND ASSOCIATED WITH

Material PAPER --CARDBOARD

Manufact. Date 1890-1910

Acquired in 1946, but dated to the early 20th century, the handwritten note on the back says "...with an Authentic history of over 200 years." Sounds like someone in (about) 1900 was of the opinion the vine(yard) was planted in about 1700. Which would chime with Reimer's opinion of "[carried from] Tyrrell County to Roanoke Island by Ann Ashbee. This may be possible, as Ann Ashbee in 1799 married Maurice Baum, who in 1797 had purchased the property on Roanoke Island on which the old vines now stand." Except that he, in 1909, qualified his opinion with a reference to "certain old documents" that may have been relevant, but were not quoted or identified. Alas.





50-32

OLD GRAPE-VINE,  
ROANOKE ISLAND, N.C.

Previous page:

*Photo Courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.*

Object Name Postcard

Catalog Number H.19XX.219.2

Digital Photo Numbers: 19XX\_219\_2a & b

(From an email correspondence with Eric Blevins, photographer for the museum: “The postcards are unused and not dated, but since they have an accession number with an “XX” prefix, this would place them being here prior to 1914.”)

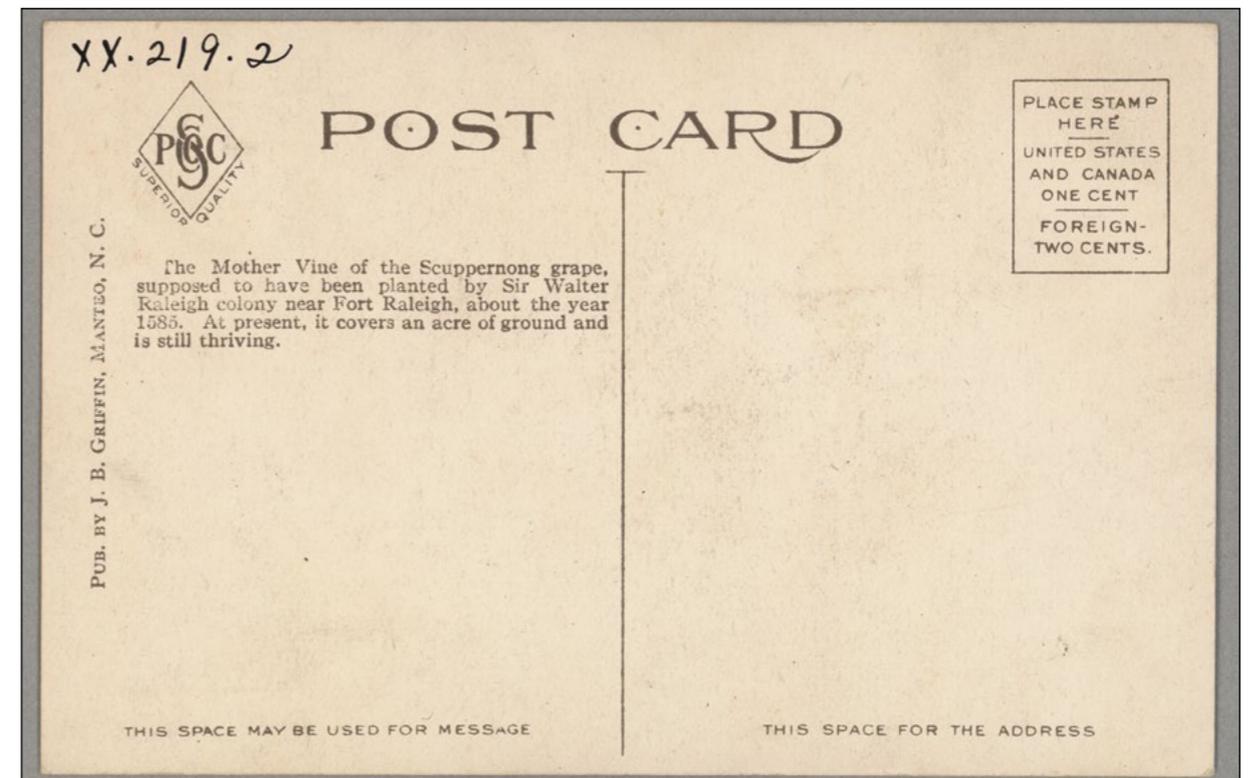
Artist/Maker PUBLISHED BY J.B. GRIFFIN

Material CARDBOARD

Manufact. Date 1900-1915

*Note several vines receding into background. Yet the postcard text says “The Mother Vine...” and “...it covers an acre of ground...” A bit of confusion between the Mother Vine, singular and Mother Vineyard, plural?*

*The plant in the far background with the swing-set arm appears to be what is now called the Mother Vine.*



## State Archives of North Carolina

*Two series of photos. One is stamped on the back “WILLIAM DANIEL STUDIO” and the others “SIDDELL STUDIO.”*

*It’s sad to see the old house crumbling away.*

*“...the images...provided should be cited as, Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina. They are not copyrighted but are public domain.”*

*—Vann Evans; Audiovisual Materials Archivist, State Archives of North Carolina, NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources.*

*The same photos are curated for the public by the Department of Conservation and Development, Travel Information Division Photographs. That site labels them “Mother Vineyard, about 1930, Roanoke Island, Baum House (Maurice Baum) about 1900.”*

*An archivist at the State Archives says, “Siddell Studio was a large Raleigh area photo studio that in part performed contract work for state government.” None of the notes available say why or by whom the photos were taken.*



*Previous page:*

Accession Nbr: H.1952.90.79

Agency: Museum of History

Date Made: 1930-1940

Dim-Eng: [Lt]2 13/16" [Wdt]4 1/2"

Dim-Metric: [Lt]7.2 cm [Wdt]11.5 cm

Category: COMMUNICATION ARTIFACTS

Class: DOCUMENTARY ARTIFACT

Alt Name:

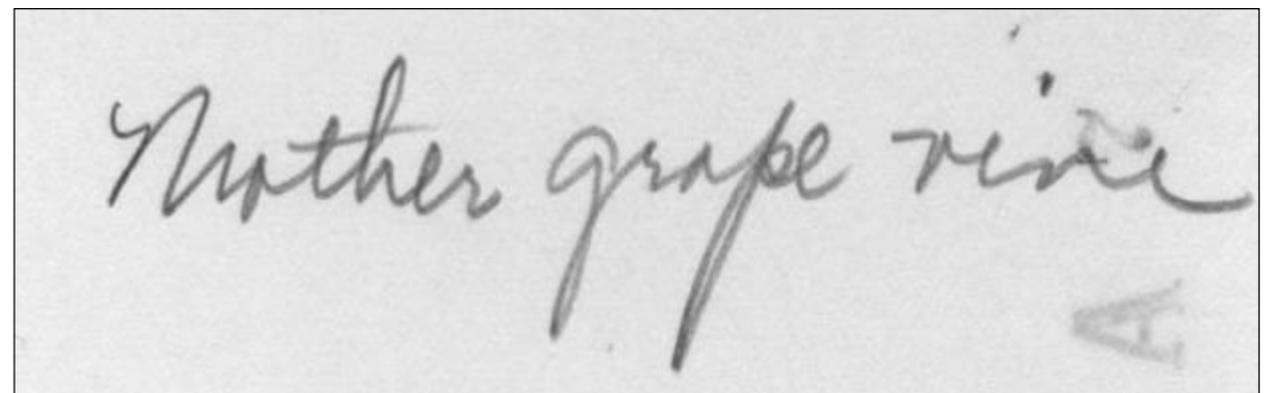
Signat/Marks:

Description: B&W, RECTANGULAR, OF THE MOTHER VINEYARD, ROANOKE ISLAND, 1930. SHOWS TWO STORY WOODEN BUILDING, PART OF DIRT ROAD AND VINES SUPPORTED BY WOODEN STRUCTURE. WRITTEN ON BACK: "MOTHER GRAPE VINE". STAMPED ON BACK: "A 7".

Place Made: USA NORTH CAROLINA DARE MANTEO

Place Used: USA NORTH CAROLINA

Material: PAPER





daniel

*Previous page:*

Accession Nbr: H.1952.90.75

Agency: Museum of History

Date Made: 1930-1940

Description: B&W, RECTANGULAR, OF THE MOTHER VINEYARD, ROANOKE ISLAND, 1930. SHOWS TWO STORY WOODEN BUILDING AND VINES SUPPORTED BY WOODEN STRUCTURE. STAMPED ON BACK: "WILLIAM DANIEL'S STUDIO/ RALEIGH, N.C." AND "C11".

Place Made: USA NORTH CAROLINA DARE MANTEO

Place Used: USA NORTH CAROLINA

Artist/Maker: WILLIAM DANIEL STUDIO

Material: PAPER



*Previous page:*

Accession Nbr: H.1952.90.71

Agency: Museum of History

Date Made: 1930-1940

Description: B&W, RECTANGULAR, OF THE MOTHER VINEYARD, ROANOKE ISLAND, 1930. SHOWS VIEW OF TWO-STORY WOODEN STRUCTURE AND OTHER OUT BUILDING FROM A FIELD BEHIND AN OVERGROWN FENCE. STAMPED ON BACK: "FINISHED BY/ SIDDELL STUDIO/ RALEIGH, N.C." AND "A 38".

Place Made: USA NORTH CAROLINA DARE MANTEO

Place Used: USA NORTH CAROLINA

Artist/Maker: SIDDELL STUDIO

Material: PAPER



siddell

*Previous page:*

Accession Nbr: H.1952.90.70

Agency: Museum of History

Date Made: 1930-1940

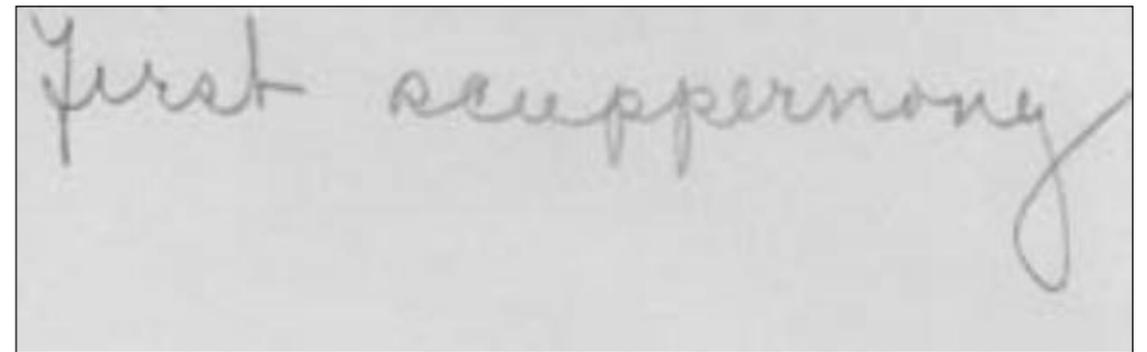
Description: B&W, RECTANGULAR, OF THE MOTHER VINEYARD, ROANOKE ISLAND, 1930. SHOWS UP-CLOSE VIEW OF VINES. PART OF HOUSE WITH PORCH VISIBLE IN UPPER LEFT HAND CORNER. STAMPED ON BACK: "FINISHED BY/ SIDDELL STUDIO/ RALEIGH, N.C." AND "A 38". WRITTEN ON BACK: "FRESH\* SCUPPERNONG".

Place Made: USA NORTH CAROLINA DARE MANTEO

Place Used: USA NORTH CAROLINA

Artist/Maker: SIDDELL STUDIO

Material: PAPER



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\* [sic] Should be "First"



*Previous page:*

Accession Nbr: H.1952.90.74

Agency: Museum of History

Date Made: 1930-1940

Description: B&W, RECTANGULAR, OF THE MOTHER VINEYARD, ROANOKE ISLAND, 1930. SHOWS CLOSE-UP ON TWO-STORY WOODEN STRUCTURE (HOUSE) WITH MAN AND WOMAN STANDING ON EITHER SIDE OF FRONT DOOR. VINES CAN BE SEEN GROWING TO THE LEFT.\* STAMPED: "FINISHED BY/ SIDDELL STUDIO/ RALEIGH ...".

Place Made: USA NORTH CAROLINA DARE MANTEO

Place Used: USA NORTH CAROLINA

Artist/Maker: SIDDELL STUDIO

Material: PAPER

Provenance Narrative: STAMPED ON BACK: "FINISHED BY/ SIDDELL STUDIO/ RALEIGH, N.C." AND "A 38".

*It's interesting to note he's been gathering something. Cuttings of the vine to propagate at home?*



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\* Looks to me like "right," but I suppose it would be *his* "left."

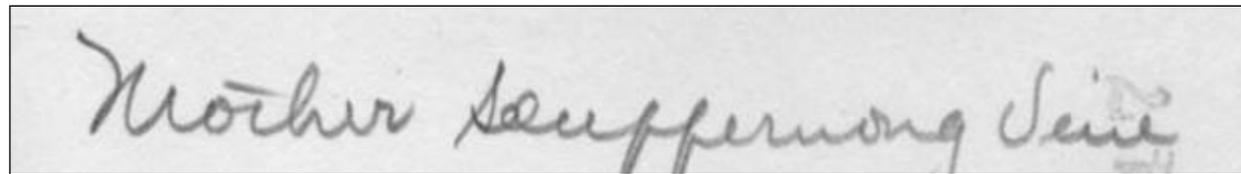


*Previous page:*

*N\_30\_1\_24*

*This photo, curated for the public by the Department of Conservation and Development, Travel Information Division Photographs, labels it “Mother Vineyard, about 1930, Roanoke Island, Baum House (Maurice Baum) about 1900.”*

*The web site also has this picture from the back of the photo:*





OLD MOTHER VINYARD  
Roanoke Island, N. C.

*Previous page:*

State Archives of North Carolina Raleigh, NC

Mother Vineyard, Roanoke Island 001

From PhC.184 Massengill Postcard Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC.

**Department of Conservation and Development, Travel  
Information Division Photograph Collection, State  
Archives of North Carolina**

Mother Vineyard in Manteo, NC, June 1944.  
Taken by State Photographer John Hemmer.

*New York Times*, October 8, 1981, Section B, Page 10

John Hemmer, an award-winning press photographer, died here yesterday. He was 89 years old and had lived at the Pinehurst Nursing Center since 1971.

Mr. Hemmer, who was born in New York City, was a staff photographer for *The Daily News* for many years. He was the first president of the New York Press Photographers Association and later served as official photographer for the State of North Carolina.

Hugh Morton, a friend, said blindness had forced Mr. Hemmer to give up photography in 1970. He said Mr. Hemmer had received the Sprague Award from the National Press Photographers Association in 1951 for contributions to news photography.

Mr. Hemmer is survived by a son, John of Tucson, Ariz.

*Email from Vann Evans; Audiovisual Materials Archivist, State Archives of North Carolina, NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources on 2021-09-30...*

*“These are photos produced by photographers for a state government institution and they were transferred to us in 1977. That Dept of Conservation and Development, Travel Info Division, promoted travel and tourism the state, so they went out and photographed a lot of destinations. Some of these likely appeared in period publications or pamphlets or bulletins...”*

*Gohdes has an immensely long history of the Mother Vine*

*property as a commercial enterprise and the uses of “Mother Vine” and “Virginia Dare” as a label. Readers who are interested are referred to his work. It’s too complicated to try to present in this document! Here is a precis:*

Mother Vineyard Winery was organized about 1930 and operated in Manteo until 1954. It used scuppernong grapes from the “Mother Vine” on Roanoke as well as muscadines from other vineyards for its wines. Canandaigua purchased the Mother Vineyard Winery in 1948. The Old Mother Vineyard also supplied grapes to Paul Garrett. Under Garrett, “Mother Vineyard” became a bestselling brand of scuppernong wine. A company in Petersburg, Virginia (a subsidiary of Canandaigua), also acquired the rights to the “Mother Vineyard” name in 1956. Former state senator Fountain Odom in 2003 established Mother Vine LLC to cultivate clippings from the Roanoke vine and produce wine. The resulting Mother Vine Premium Scuppernong Wine was, according to David Fussell Sr., “One of the most delicious wines you have ever tasted.”

—Helsley

*As of 2021, <https://themothervine.com/> lists many grape products, but no wine.*

*You can read a bit about Virginia Dare wine from the Mother Vine(yard) at **Virginia Dare, the White Doe** later on. And here are some pictures of the Mother Vine(yard) during the period when its owners—whoever they were—had it as a business.*

*Duplin Winery produced a Mothervine Wine some years ago, but may have given that up. They had planted a vinyard with cuttings/scions of the Mother Vine. Their claim was the Mothervine Wine also included some tiny bit of Mother Vine grapes. In 2021, at <https://www.duplinwinery.com/mothervine-reserve.html> they offer a Scuppernong, with no mention of any relation to the Mother Vine. They do offer a Mothervine Reserve Keepsake Estate Wine.*

*“Mothervine Reserve is sweet but balanced with acidity and the fruity essence of America’s native grapes. Our winemakers set aside an exceptional Duplin Estate harvest and the best scuppernong grapes grown on cuttings taken from North Carolina’s 400-year-old mother vine in Manteo. The wine comes with a beautiful keepsake tasting sheet that tells the story of this momentous wine from mother vine to bottle.”*

*As of 2021-10, working on trying to find out who these people are and what “Mother Vineyard” was in 1944. The young woman has to have been the man’s daughter.*

NO. 4335-

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

NEWS BUREAU

X SUBJECT Mother Vineyard

X LOCALITY Manties, N.C. DATE 6/44

A

B

(Inactive)

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State Archives of North Carolina Raleigh, NC

ConDev4335\_Overview

Mother Vineyard in Manteo, NC, June 1944, taken by John Hemmer.

Photo card archived at the Department of Conservation and Development (ConDev), Travel Information Division Photograph Collection.



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State Archives of North Carolina Raleigh, NC

ConDev4335A

Mother Vineyard in Manteo, NC, June 1944, taken by John Hemmer.

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ConDev4335C

Mother Vineyard in Manteo, NC, June 1944, taken by John Hemmer.

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of North Carolina.



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ConDev4335B

Mother Vineyard in Manteo, NC, June 1944, taken by John Hemmer.

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ConDev4335D

Mother Vineyard in Manteo, NC, June 1944, taken by John Hemmer.

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ConDev4335E

Mother Vineyard in Manteo, NC, June 1944, taken by John Hemmer.

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## The Keepers of the Mother Vine

*Published by Our State Magazine 2021, at <https://www.ourstate.com/mother-vine/>. Asked permission 2021-08-31.*

Food

### The Keepers of the Mother Vine

*On Roanoke Island, in the care of a vigilant couple, a piece of our history still grows.*



*By Chris Burritt; Sep 24, 2014*

The Mother Vine, a rambler of a scuppernong growing wild and free, stood between Jack Wilson and the waterfront house he planned to build for his wife, Estelle, and their 5-year-old son, John, on the outskirts of Manteo. It was 1957, before progress stripped away many of the grapevines growing on this northeastern section of Roanoke Island. The Mother Vine covered almost an acre of the Wilsons' property, so Jack hired a bulldozer. By the end of the job, the bulldozer had uprooted half of the sprawling vines that had stretched from a dense tangle in the sandy soil to the Roanoke Sound 80 yards away.

“To me, a big grapevine was just a big grapevine,” says Jack, now 89, explaining his early view of the Mother Vine.

The Mother Vine, though, is no ordinary scuppernong. Some historians believe it may be America's oldest cultivated grapevine, possibly planted by the Croatan Indians or by early English settlers. Those would have been the ones following the original colonists who disappeared mysteriously in the late 1580s and live on in “The Lost Colony” outdoor drama, just a mile and a half from Jack and Estelle's place on cedar-lined Mother Vineyard Road. Not everyone is convinced that the Mother Vine deserves its claim to fame — some say that it may not be the original vine discovered by colonists, that Tyrrell County, not Dare, may have been home to the oldest scuppernong vines in the Old North State.

Whatever the case may be, scuppernongs were plentiful on North Carolina's coast when Capt. Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe landed on Roanoke Island in 1584 as leaders of Sir Walter Raleigh's first expedition to the New World. Amadas and Barlowe wrote that the land was “so full of grapes as the very beating and surge of the seas overflowed them.”

The Wilsons' own roots are firmly planted in this soil. The Manteo sweethearts married in 1949, after Jack finished a stint in the Coast Guard and decided to pursue Estelle instead of moving to Texas to train as a merchant marine. She worked for the Dare County schools, and he worked for Kellogg Supply Co., a building supply company in Manteo. Sixty-five years later, they live comfortably together in a home filled with local art and a wide-open view of the sound.

For a long time, despite the Mother Vine's historical significance, Jack resisted thinking about it in a public way. He didn't like tourists parading through his yard for a look at the vine and sometimes

peering into the house. “When I first got here, I didn’t want to talk about the vine because I didn’t want anybody up here,” Jack says. “Now I’m happy for anybody to look at the vine and take pictures. But I don’t want busloads of people coming up here and interfering with my lifestyle.”

His change of heart can be attributed to Estelle’s encouragement, and to the fact that, in the past 57 years, the Mother Vine has taken root in the Wilsons’ lives.



One afternoon, Jack stoops slightly to walk under the Mother Vine’s canopy. His strong, dark hands snap deadwood that blocks sunlight. He fiddles with new methods of pruning to promote growth of new vines and fruit. “It doesn’t produce as much as it did,”

he says. “It’s just getting too old.”

Part of that, Jack admits, is his fault. In recent years, he realized that the bulldozer that cleared his home site also damaged the grapevine. Digging up so many of the vines caused its oldest root to shrink, a reaction to the smaller number of vines it was feeding, according to Jack’s son, John. “We didn’t understand until the last decade as we watched the big root atrophy that we had actually caused it,” John says.

That fact made Jack more appreciative of the fragility of the Mother Vine. And in 2010, a poison scare generated national headlines, further convincing him of the vine’s importance. A utility worker accidentally sprayed the vine with powerful herbicide intended to kill roadside brush. The spray hit a tendril of the Mother Vine growing up a power pole, and from that spot, leaves began turning brown and shriveling up.

Specialists arrived from North Carolina State University and the University of Virginia. Standing in the yard, Jack listened to their

recommendation to cut out a third of the vines to “get ahead of this dying before it gets ahead of us,” he recalls. Their advice reminded him of the bulldozer’s harm. He told the university experts, “I’m not going to consent to that yet.”

Jack contacted Donald Hawkins, who, as owner of Vineworks in Magnolia, has installed about 20 vineyards since 2001, including 25 acres for Duplin Winery in Rose Hill. After seeing the Mother Vine, Hawkins suggested clipping short sections of the vine to see whether the inside had turned brown, a sign that the poison had reached that far. Fortunately, it had spread only a few feet from the utility pole.

So the Mother Vine lives on.

Estelle makes preserves from the grapes. Mornings, Jack drinks coffee out there and inspects his handiwork — tidy vines on stout black locust posts — as the rhythm of the seasons pulls him along. He prunes in February, the coldest month, when the sap is down. He makes sure the arbor is sturdy enough to hold the extra weight from the springtime growth and clips vines dangling down at harvest time. He keeps a dozen pairs of clippers around the house.

Now, as then, in late summer, the canopy is green and lush, and bronze grapes dangle at the perfect height for a child to pluck like sweet candy drops. Jack and Estelle are reminded of John when he was a boy, picking grapes to sell by the roadside. They've made sure others will share the same opportunity.

“We might own the land,” Estelle says, “but the vine belongs to all people.”

## Mother Vine Poisoned

### Mother Vine Poisoned

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### Nursing The Nation’s Oldest Grapevine Back To Health

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### Nursing The Nation’s Oldest Grapevine Back To Health

*All Things Considered, July 07, 2010 3:00 PM ET*

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ROBERT SIEGEL, host:

From NPR News, this is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I’m Robert Siegel.

MELISSA BLOCK, host:

And I’m Melissa Block.

The Mother Vine is sick. We’re talking about a grapevine on Roanoke Island in North Carolina. It’s thought to be the country’s oldest cultivated grapevine, maybe 400 years old. Well, in May, a contractor for the utility company Dominion Power sprayed it with a powerful herbicide.

Since then, the Wilson family has been trying to nurse the Mother Vine back to health. The family owns about half the property where that vine grows.

John Wilson joins us phone from Manteo on Roanoke Island to tell us about the vine’s progress. Welcome to the program.

Mr. JOHN WILSON: Thank you.

BLOCK: And tell me first what the Mother Vine looks like when she’s healthy.

Mr. WILSON: She covers about a quarter of an acre now, and she’s very large in circumference. If you and I stood around her and stretched out our arms, we would have trouble touching one another.

BLOCK: Wow, huge thing and then centuries old, and what kind of grapes?

Mr. WILSON: Scuppernong, white grapes. It’s a kind of muscadine.

BLOCK: And so everybody down there would know about the Mother Vine?

Mr. WILSON: Absolutely, for generations. Everybody—almost everyone in North Carolina knows about the Mother Vine.

BLOCK: Well, what happened with this herbicide?

Mr. WILSON: In the spring, the power company had contractors on the island, cutting limbs and trimming areas around wires. And evidently, they had a truckload of Garland 4A, a pretty nasty herbicide, and sometimes—they simply sprayed from the truck around the power poles.

And the Mother Vine had one little tendril, no bigger around than a pencil, growing up a power pole, and they sprayed it. And I guess the wind was blowing because it killed part of my dad's hedge, it killed a number of very old limbs in a pecan tree, and it started to kill the front corner of the vineyard.

BLOCK: The front corner of the Mother Vine, you're talking about.

Mr. WILSON: Yes.

BLOCK: And what did that look like? How could you tell?

Mr. WILSON: It just all turned brown and crispy, and my dad was out cutting all the deadwood out. And the next day, there would be some more, and he would cut some more. And the next day, there would be some more.

The herbicide is systemic, and it was sending the poison from the ends of the vine back toward the root. So each day, he would cut, and the next day, it would be dead a little farther back.

BLOCK: Well, that's got to feel terrible.

Mr. WILSON: It was very distressing to my father. He has been honored to be the steward of the Mother Vine for the last 50 years, and he certainly didn't want anything to happen to her on his watch. So he called N.C. State's Department of Agriculture, and the university stopped what they were doing and sent representatives—as

did the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. And they all examined her and offered opinions, and found us North Carolina's finest viticulture arborist, who has been here several times and is back today, working on the vine.

BLOCK: And what are they saying to do?

Mr. WILSON: Today, they're here thinning, to let some sunlight in. They have shocked her with nitrogen and salt and fertilizers, and my dad has been watering every two and three days. So she's getting a lot of attention, and we think she's going to be okay.

BLOCK: You do?

Mr. WILSON: We hope so. The first month, it was very concerning but right now, we're all optimistic.

BLOCK: Maybe she's stronger than we all would have thought.

Mr. WILSON: You know, if she's made it 400 years, I think she's going to make it through this, too.

BLOCK: Well, Mr. Wilson, we'll all keep a good thought for the Mother Vine. Thanks for telling us about it.

Mr. WILSON: Thank you so much.

BLOCK: That's John Wilson, talking with us from Roanoke Island in North Carolina. His family has been tending to the Mother Vine since it was sprayed with a weed killer in May.

## Ancient N.C. Grape Vine Has Near-Death Experience

*Permission to reproduce too expensive. See [https://www.pilotonline.com/news/article\\_3ae81522-2fec-5181-ba00-62fdaa5ea38a.html](https://www.pilotonline.com/news/article_3ae81522-2fec-5181-ba00-62fdaa5ea38a.html)*

## Donation to Local History Organization?

*Need to find reference for John Wilson IV donating the property to a Local History Organization.*

## Afterword

We'll never know when the the Mother Vine(yard) was planted. I tend to doubt it had any origins earlier than the settlers of the very early 1700s.

This is mostly because I can't find much online about Native Americans and wine. Don't remember reading anything about that in history classes. I would think that if Indigenous people welcomed the Pilgrims with wine-made-from-grapes. Or some records of its existence, somewhere.

At <https://www.winespectator.com/articles/was-there-wine-in-america-before-europeans-toyah-central-texas-unfiltered> (August, 2020), Dr. Crystal Dozier states chemical residues on pottery from "American Southern Plains" indicates the pottery might have stored wine. Or maybe grape juice.

The Wikipedia article [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcohol\\_and\\_Native\\_Americans#Pre-colonial\\_North\\_America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcohol_and_Native_Americans#Pre-colonial_North_America) states "Some Native American tribes produced weak beers, wine, and other fermented beverages..." but the brief list of examples given has none made from grapes.

Dr. Etheridge states, "The first title to the land which includes the site of Mother Vineyard was granted to Peter Baum. This was previous to 1729...Peter Baum was of the first *or second* generation of a Baum family which owned and occupied the Mother Vineyard tract..." [emphasis added]. Why Dr. Etheridge would hypothesize a previous generation to Title Holder Peter I have no idea. But, it's—perhaps—possible settlers were on the Mother Vine(yard) land in 1700? Before? And planting Scuppernongs?

Note also that Dr. Etheridge states, "An odd echo of the voice of Abraham Baum is lately quoted by Mr. John C. Bragaw in the October 1947 issue of The State, a North Carolina magazine. Mr. Bragaw draws from The North Carolina Reader (1858) the following

reference to Mother Vineyard, by "a roving reporter": "The first vine of this name (Scuppernong) was found near...the banks of Scuppernong River...by some of the party composing the first Anglo-Saxon settlement on Roanoke Island...One small vine...was transplanted very soon on Roanoke Island, where, only a few years since I saw it...and was told by old Abraham Baum, then 84 years old, that when he was a boy the vine was the largest on the Island."

Two things occur to me when reading that quote from *The North Carolina Reader*.

What would have made "a roving reporter" believe "One small vine...was transplanted very soon on Roanoke Island..." Whatever information did that is lost in the mists of time, but it chimes in perfectly with Reimer on Scuppernongs.

"One small vine..."? The Mother Vineyard had five vines. Whence the other four?

While it may be true that "the vine was the largest on the Island," what did that mean? The vine was the thickest at the base? The vine on its trellis covered more area than any other trellised vine? Or that old Abraham just hadn't measured and compared his vine to every other one on the island?

In any case, no matter by whom planted, The Mothervine(yard) is of incredible age for a cultivated plant, a fascinating remainder of North Carolina history, and a thing of beauty. Long may she live!

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*First Edition, published 2022-01-15.*

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Numerous internet sites have been quoted, and also provided photographs. All of these have URL references on respective pages.

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