The natural history of North-Carolina. With an account of the trade, manners, and customs of the Christian and Indian inhabitants. Illustrated with copper-plates, ... several strange beasts, birds, fishes

Grimes J Bryan
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NOTE.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF NORTH CAROLINA, written by John Brickell, a physician who lived and practiced medicine in Edenton, N. C., about 1731, is the most interesting of the early histories of the State. Copies of this book are now very rare and difficult to obtain. Within the past few months a student of the State's history considered himself fortunate in securing one from abroad, at a cost of more than $40.

As the growing interest in the State's history in the past few years makes it desirable to place this book within the reach of readers, the trustees of the State Library have authorized its republication.

Dr. Brickell's history is the best description we have of the natural, social, and economic conditions in the Colony of North Carolina, but its merits have been obscured and its value largely depreciated by careless and unjust reviewers.

Jared Sparks and others charged him with plagiarizing Lawson. Of this, Dr. Stephen B. Weeks says:

"These statements are only partially correct, and do grave injustice to Brickell. He acknowledges in his preface that his work is 'a compendious collection of most things yet known in that part of the world.' But it is a good deal more than a mere slavish reprint of Lawson. It is further increased almost one-half in bulk. The reprint of Lawson made in 1860 contains 390 pages, with about 270 words to the page. Of this space, 106 pages are taken up with his 'Journal of a Thousand Miles Travel.' This part is not used by Brickell. The edition of his work published in 1737 contains 408 pages, about 340 words to the page.

"Brickell took the book of Lawson, reworked it in his own fashion, extended or curtailed, and brought it to his time. The effect of his professional training is seen everywhere,
for there is hardly a description of a plant or animal which does not have some medical use attached to it. His work is fuller, more systematic, and seems more like that of a student; Lawson’s work seems more like that of a traveler and observer. There is, besides, much more relating to the social condition of the Colony in Brickell, who has a section on ‘The religion, houses, raiment, diet, liquors, firing, diversions, commodities, languages, diseases, curiosities, cattle, etc.,’ while Lawson sticks close to the natural, economic, and Indian history of the Province.”

Of Dr. Brickell little is known. Major John W. Moore says that Dr. John Brickell, “the naturalist, physician, and historian,” and his brother, the Rev. Matthias Brickell, came with Governor Burrington to Carolina. Dr. Brickell remained at Edenton, while his brother became the first rector of St. Johns in Bertie County, “which for years was the only house of worship west of the Chowan River.”

Dr. Brickell appears as a member of the grand jury of the whole Province, in 1731, and signed a congratulatory address to the King upon the purchase of the Colony by the Crown from the Lords Proprietors.

While in North Carolina, Dr. Brickell probably rendered the Colony some service in a friendly mission to the Cherokee Indians, and penetrated far into the territory now included in the State of Tennessee. His description of this journey is most interesting, and though overdrawn, is a distinct contribution to our history of the habits of the North Carolina Indians. We have no record of Dr. Brickell’s career after he left North Carolina.

The Rev. Matthias Brickell is said to have been a man of power and influence in the Colony, and his son, Col. Matthias Brickell, was a soldier in the Revolution.

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1Moore’s History of N. C. Vol. 1, page 49.
Note.

Several of the family have been members of the General Assembly, and though the name is now extinct, numerous descendants still live in the State.

In reprinting Brickell’s Natural History of North Carolina, the original text is followed as closely as possible. The original editions do not contain an index, but a copy in the possession of the writer has been carefully indexed in such a painstaking, accurate hand, as to appear almost like copper-plate, and that index is added to this reprint.

J. Bryan Grimes.
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of the
Trustees of the Public Libraries.
The Natural History of North-Carolina.

With an Account of the Trade, Manners, and Customs of the Christian and Indian Inhabitants, Illustrated with Copper-Plates, whereon are curiously Engraved the Map of the Country, several strange Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Snakes, Insects, Trees, and Plants, &c.

By John Bricklel, M.D.

Nostra nos in urbe peregrinamur. Cic.

Dublin:

Printed by James Carson, in Coghills-Court, Dame Street, opposite to the Castle-Market. For the Author, 1737.
THE PREFACE.

It will not be to my purpose to enquire whether America was known to the Antients, there being various Opinions about it, yet with more Curiosity than certainty, whence this New World was Peopled; some assigning that the Hesperides (so called from Hesperus King of Spain) and the Continent of America were Peopled by the Spaniards. Others affirm that the Americans are the Race of Jews carried into captivity by Salamanazer and placed in Countries till then not Inhabited, after a progress of 18 Months. Many believe they were People carried by Storm, being Chinesses sailing on the Pacific South Sea, or other Northern People (allowing the possibility of each Opinion)

I will
Preface.

I will not pretend to take upon me to decide the Controversy, being altogether a stranger to the certainty of the Fact.

The Writings of many Learned Men may be seen on this Head, who after having search'd all the Records of Antiquity, shew much Erudition, but nothing of certainty, concerning the Antient Affairs of America. I know the Memory of a Deluge is preserved amongst these People, but whether it is to be understood of the universal Flood, or the Inundation of some particular Provinces, I leave it to others to discourse upon, for I am willing to lay aside all manner of Conjectures of this Nature, having enough of Truth to treat of.

The several Climates of the World have influenced the People with Natures very different from each other, and even their different Speeches bear some proportion of Analogie with their Natures, as is to be seen amongst the Whites, Indians, and Blacks, that are to be met with in this part of the World.

But waving these Discourses, we here present the World with a Natural-History of North-Carolina, it being a compendious Collection, of most things yet known in that part of the World; wherein I have laid down every thing with Impartiality and Truth, in the most plain and easy Terms, which indeed is the Duty of every Writer, and preferable to a more eloquent Stile, accompanied with many Falsities.

I have therefore endeavou'rd in the following Sheets to give as faithful and exact Account of Carolina, as discoveries yet