

Greetings again from the folks at Village Craftsmen!

Spring is definitely in the air. It is time for repairing and painting boats, opening of shops and restaurants and, of course, a pleasant walk on the beach.

Ocracoke Island Beach



Last month some islanders passed Thursday, March 16 with hardly a thought for “Old Quawk.” Fifty or more years ago that would not have been the case.

In the late 1700’s or early 1800’s a man of indeterminate origin made his home on Ocracoke, but not in the area of the present-day village. Several miles north, on a small hill, or hammock, he built his simple home of bull rushes and driftwood.

He had arrived on the island, some said, on a schooner from a distant land. Others claimed he had been shipwrecked on the beach and had decided to remain here. It was even rumored that he had once been a pirate. At any rate he was different from the other residents. Not only was he dark skinned (some think he was of African, West Indian, or perhaps Puerto Rican descent), he was not a friendly sort of fellow. It is said he was often surly and disagreeable, preferring his solitude to interaction with the rest of the island community. When he got excited or argumentative people thought he squawked like a night heron. Hence the nickname, Old Quawk, or Old Quork. No one knew his given name.

Like the other men of the island, Old Quawk fished nets in Pamlico Sound. On March 16 many years ago the weather had turned nasty. Storm clouds had formed on the horizon, the wind had picked up and the sea was running rough. All of the fishermen were concerned about their nets but more concerned still for their safety. It was agreed among them that the day was much too stormy to risk venturing out in their small sailing skiffs.

All agreed, save Old Quawk. His nets were too important to him and he had no fear. Cursing the weather, his weak-kneed neighbors and God himself, he set out in his small boat to salvage his catch and his equipment. He was either very brave or very fool-hardy, or both. At any rate, he never returned and he and his boat were never seen again.

For more than one hundred and seventy five years seafarers from Ocracoke and even

farther north on the Outer Banks paid healthy respect to the memory of Old Quawk by staying in port on March 16. Superstitions pass with time, however, and nowadays many islanders do not even note the date, let alone pay it any heed.

Nevertheless, Old Quawk lives on in the names of landmarks near where he made his home: "Quork Hammock" and "Old Quork's Creek." Next time you cross the bridge that leads across the creek that bears this colorful character's name think of him on his last tempestuous day, his fist raised to the heavens, cursing and inveighing against God and Mother Nature. Perhaps you will even be a tad more cautious if you decide to go boating on March 16. Or maybe you will wait for another day, when the forecast is a bit brighter! In our last newsletter I mentioned that Ocracoke Island's own folk band, Molasses Creek, has been chosen as one of six contestants to perform in A Prairie Home Companion's "Talent from Towns Under 2000" competition. They will appear live at New York City's Town Hall on Garrison Keillor's show on April 15, 2000. Don't forget to tune in. There will also be an opportunity to vote on-line for your favorite performers. We hope you will support these fine musicians.

Molasses Creek is a member of the North Carolina Arts Council's Touring Roster and spends much of the year touring throughout the eastern United States. Early in 1999 Molasses Creek's fourth album, "Citybound," captured the #1 spot on the European Country Music Association Airplay Charts.

You can order Molasses Creek cassettes and CD's directly from our web page by clicking [here](#).

Until next time, we hope you find time to relax and enjoy time with family and friends.

Philip and the entire staff of Village Craftsmen