

Hoi Toiders ^[1]

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by Amelia Dees-Killette, 2006

Hoi Toiders is the commonly used name for the residents of certain sections of the Outer Banks ^[2] in North Carolina who, because of geographic barriers, have retained a unique dialect unheard in other parts of the state. Many of the early settlers on the Outer Banks were English, Scottish, Irish, and Scotch-Irish; others came from the Albemarle Sound region of North Carolina, Tidewater Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Separation from the interior regions of North Carolina, and the uncertainties of the sea and weather, made them fiercely independent, stalwart, and unwilling to accept change. Picturesque villages such as Wanchese ^[3], Hatteras ^[4], Ocracoke ^[5], and Harkers Island ^[6] remain the homes of these North Carolinians whose culture and dialect are a result of their isolation and seafaring tradition.

The Hoi Toiders' unique speech-labeled by linguists as an Ocracoke brogue-is a combination of many early influences, especially seventeenth-century English regional dialects. The dialect's most characteristic feature is evident in the pronunciation of the phrase "high tide" as "hoi toide" in a way similar to how it is pronounced in parts of southwestern England even today. Usages such as "weren't" in the place of "wasn't" ("she weren't here") and "to" for "at" ("she's to the store now") also mark Hoi Toider speech and appear to have come from eastern England. The word "mommick," meaning to harass or bother, which was used in the time of Shakespeare, remains in the Outer Banks lexicon thanks to the Hoi Toiders.

Hoi Toiders have earned a living as fishermen, pilots, whalers, seamen, and boatbuilders. After the Civil War ^[7], many worked in commercial fisheries and menhaden factories. They also were the first members of the U.S. Lifesaving Service ^[8]. Whatever their occupation, they have been resourceful, as evidenced by the women's using seaweed to stuff mattresses and the men's salvaging shipwrecks to build skiffs, homes, and churches. Regardless of the influence of "dingbatters," or nonnatives of the Outer Banks, Hoi Toiders' culture, and much of their "relic" language, continue to survive in the early 2000s.

References:

Rodney Barfield, *Seasoned by Salt: A Historical Album of the Outer Banks*(1995).

Walt Wolfram and Natalie Shilling-Estes, *Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks: The Story of the Ocracoke Brogue*(1997).

Additional Resources:

Hoi toiders' recipes and remembrances : more than just another cookbook. By the Ocracoke Volunteer Fire Dept. (Ocracoke, N.C.); Ocracoke Fire Protection Association (Ocracoke, N.C.): <https://www.worldcat.org/title/hoi-toiders-recipes-and-remembrances-more-than-just-another-cookbook/oclc/29540760> ^[9].

The North Carolina Language and Life Project, NCSU: <https://www.ncsu.edu/linguistics/ncllp/sites/harkersisland.php> ^[10]

Video Credit:

Carolina Outer Banks Brogue Vocabulary, made available by the North Carolina Language and Life Project ^[11]: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgi9wYsR5fo> ^[12]

Subjects:

Culture ^[13]

Authors:

Dees-Killette, Amelia ^[14]

Origin - location:

Coastal Plain ^[15]

Carteret County ^[16]

Currituck County ^[17]

Dare County ^[18]

Hyde County ^[19]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.^[20]

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