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Title of Proposal: One Whale of a Bridge: A History of North Carolina's Old Bone Foot Log

Abstract: Known as the "Old Bone Foot-Log," a fossilized whale skeleton once spanned Fishing Creek, north of Whitakers, North Carolina. Though the ancient cetacean remains are only partially documented in 18th century newspaper articles and geological reports, sources are consistent in the fossil's use as a bridge. Allegedly the subject of superstitions amongst local slave communities and believed to have been located on the former property of Confederate Major J.M. Mayo, the Old Bone Foot-Log lays at the nexus of history and geology. In fact, paleontological interest in the specimen resulted in a tangible link between the founding of the North Carolina State Museum, the Smithsonian, and the controversial paleontologist, Edward Drinker Cope. Deposited on the seafloor over two million years ago and discovered 180 kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean, the skeleton presents an interesting challenge to conventional concepts of maritime history.