



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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THE COLONIAL CHILD AT BRUNSWICK TOWN

The fifty years between 1726 and 1776, when Brunswick Town was occupied, was sufficient time for an individual to have spent his entire lifetime in the town. Our records are not complete enough to point to many such individuals, however, we do know of some who spent at least a part of their childhood years in Brunswick. Alfred Moore, the Supreme Court Justice, who is buried in the graveyard at the St. Philips Church in Brunswick, was living in the town as a boy of fifteen. The ruin of his home, owned by his father Judge Maurice Moore, has recently been excavated, and several objects probably lost by Alfred, have been found. Among these is a jew's-harp and a number of marbles.

Another resident of Brunswick as a child was Cornelius Harnett, Jr., the Revolutionary War patriot. Cornelius was three years old when his father moved to Brunswick in 1726. By sifting the soil from the ruins of the town, the archaeologist has recovered objects which are reminders of the world of the colonial children, such as Cornelius Harnett, who grew up in the town and played in its yards and streets. Children whose love for America developed from their love of this spot on the bank of the Cape Fear River, and who, as they matured, were to support the ideals which gave birth to a new nation.

Fishhooks and lead line-sinkers give us a clue that a few hours fishing in the Cape Fear was as much fun for the colonial boy as it is for boys of the twentieth century. During quiet days of winter the boys of Brunswick probably played checkers with the older folks, sometimes using a fragment of broken Delft or oriental porcelain ground to a round shape as inexpensive checkers.

"Whizzers" of lead were made and fastened to a string to provide hours of entertainment for the younger children. The boy who dreamed of becoming a mariner may have owned the miniature compass found during the excavation of the Public House-Tailor shop (shown just above the pocket knife in the photograph). Many colonial boys were supplied with bone handled pocket knives, but one small knife is of particular interest among those recovered from the Brunswick ruins. This knife, from the Malay Straits area of the world, remind us that ships from Port Brunswick traveled to many distant ports, supplying porcelain from China, and other goods from England and the West Indies. The Arabic-Malay script on one side of the knife is translated as "Allah the Divider", and on the reverse side "There is No God But God". The loss of this knife was probably deeply regretted by some Brunswick boy, and was recovered after two centuries, by the archaeologist.

Girls at Brunswick played with miniature sets of Delft dishes, and helped their mothers sew, using dainty little thimbles. As they grew older they may have kept their secret possessions in a box locked with one of the several miniature brass locks found in the ruins. The only doll found is a very small black glass figure which may have been an ornament on a dish.

The ruin of the little ten by sixteen foot chapel, which was used during the week as a school, has been found, but is yet to be excavated. However, slate pencils recovered from other ruins witness to many hours spent by Brunswick children with a slate, learning the mystery of making symbols for communicating ideas. An interesting discovery at Brunswick was the apparent use, by the children, of broken kaolin pipe stems for slate pencils. These discarded stems were abundant throughout the town, where as a pencil of slate was more difficult to obtain, so the children used pipe stems as a substitute.

As excavation of the Brunswick ruins continues more toys lost or broken by the children of the town will be discovered, providing more clues to the colonial way of life at this historic spot.



Objects from the world of the Colonial child.

The following was taken from The Pennsylvania Gazette, from Thursday, April 29, to Thursday, May 6, 1731, published by Benjamin Franklin, in Philadelphia.

THE CAPE FEAR COUNTRY (Part I)
by
Hugh Meredith

The new settlement going forward at Cape Fear, having for these 3 or 4 years past, been the Subject of much Discourse, especially among the Country People; and great numbers resorting thither continually from this and the neighboring Provinces, merely to view the Place and learn the Nature of the Country, that they may be capable of judging whether it will probably be an advantageous Exchange if they should remove and settle there; and none having at their Return published their Observations for the Information of others; The following Account of CAPE FEAR (extracted from the private Letters of a judicious and impartial Person, who lately resided there some Time, and who had not the least Interest that might induce him either to commend or discommend the Country beyond strict Truth, it is thought will not be unacceptable to a great Part of our Readers.

CAPE FEAR is the name Mariners give to a Spit of Sand which runs out to SEA on the East Side of the Mouth of Clarendon (commonly called Cape Fear) River and vulgarly gives name to a great Western Part of North Carolina, now called New Hanover Precinct: The Pitch or outward Point of the Cape is laid down to be in 33d. and 30m. N. Lat. and the body of the Country lies to the northward of it, and westward on the Seashore about 80 miles, where it joins South Carolina; and eastward I know not how far, but I believe no great way. The Country in general is very low and level, especially back from the Rivers; the Swamps and Savanahs seem to be as low as the Rivers and are in fact very little higher. Most of the Country is well clothed with tall Pines, excepting the Swamps, Savanahs, and some small Strips by the Sides of Rivers. The only Town they as yet have is Brunswick seated on the River Clarendon, about 18 or 20 miles from the mouth of it; having a commodious Place for Ships to lie safe in all Weathers, and is likely to be a Place of Trade, and the Seat of Government; tho' at present but a poor, hungry, unprovided Place, consisting of not about 10 or 12 scattering mean Houses, hardly worth the name of a Village; but the Platform is good and convenient, and the Ground high, considering the Country. There are several Rivers that water this Division or District; the westernmost in a little River near South Carolina; then the Shelote River, and Lockard's Folly; these three enter the Sea at about 10 Miles Distance from each other; and are, by reason of Sand-Bars cross the Mouths of them, navigable but for Boats, Shallops, and the like small Craft. The next is Elizabeth River, which is but small and of no great Length, entering the great River Clarendon near the mouth.

This River Clarendon is esteemed the best for navigation of any along that Shore, even from the Capes of Virginia, to 80 or 100 miles westward of Charlestown in South Carolina, as having the deepest Channel and easiest to find; yet with some Reason I am inclin'd to believe, that there are in that Disance several as good if not better. However, 'tis certainly a noble River, the best and almost the only one of consequence in all North Carolina. It is about half a mile wide at Brunswick, and the Tide ebbs and flows between 3 and 4 Foot Neap Tides. Vessels of above 50 or 60 Tons English Make, cannot go above 6 or 8 miles above the Town; but small Craft may go 20 or 30; and much farther they might go, were it not for a multitude of Logs that have fallen into the Rivers, which are so heavy and solid that they lie at the bottom, and many of them show but little Appearance of Decay. This River divides it self about 10 Miles above the Town; the main Branch, which is by much the largest and runs by far the longest Course, is called the Northwest; and the other Northeast, up which I was about 50 Miles by Land, (by Water it was near 80) which took up two Days Walking; and Account of which will give up an Idea of the Country in general.

At our first setting out we had a sandy Pine Barren to walk in, which was covered pretty thick with large Pine trees, and underneath small Myrtle Bushes full of Berries, and some other small Bushes to me unknown, growing in a white sand, with a black sandy mould underneath; which when cleared yields a tolerable Crop of Indian Corn and Beans, but of Potatoes of the Bermudas sort, Squashes Pompions and the like, a vast Increase, as will the worst dry land they have; though I cannot think of any Land of this kind lasting. We were not gone above a Mile before we came to some small Savanahs, which are grassy Plains having few or no Trees on them and are either wet or dry according to the Season; they were now very wet by reason of the Rains that had fallen a few Days before. These Savanahs are good Pasturage for Cattle; Beneath the Grass there is a fine black Mould, (in Some but thin, in others a very good thickness) on a blueish white Clay. In moderately wet Summers they might make tolerable good Rice-Ground, as is done with the like in South Carolina. They are so well clay'd at bottom, that what Rain falls on them is a long while draining off. In about 8 miles going, it was almost all Savanahs and one of them the Way we went. I think could be no less than two miles broad, and the Path I suppose was laid out the best way that could be without going very much about. The Water was mostly ankle-deep on them.

When we had pass'd these, we entered into Pine Land, at first but barren, but it soon grew better, and as it mended the Pines grew thinner, so that in a mile there was scarce any to be seen, but in their stead good Oak and Hickery, and the Land had small Ascents and Descents, with fine Runs of Water in the Vallies, passing among Limestone Rocks, which in their Qualities are much like those of Pennsylvania, only in this they differ, that these seem for the most part to be Oyster and other Shells cemented together; this is visible on the out side, but more to be seen when the Stones are broken, for then the several kinds of Shell may be easily distinguished: Of these they make their best Hand-Milstones, and I believe

may make good Water-Milstones, when they have such Mills to try them with. The Land here was very good, and the second Best I saw in the Country; but it cannot be above 4000 or 5000 acres, and is all settled. In this good Land we walk'd about 3 miles and cross'd the North East; after which the good land did not reach above 40 or 60 Perches. Then we entred Savanahs much such as those we had pass'd before, only the Water was not quite so deep, being seldom over our Shoes. Such was our Way for 7 or 8 miles, only here and there a narrow Strip of Pine Barren. Then we came to as good Land as ever I saw. When we came within This, the Pines were totally lost, and we had as fine a Wood to walk in as could be wished, of all the Sorts that are in Pennsylvania (Chestnut excepted) besides several other Sorts to me unknown. The Land was a fine black Mould, in some Places on a whitish Clay, others on a rusty yellow, and some on a reddish or quite red Clay. The three last are counted the best; the other inclining to the Savannah Kind. There is plenty of Limestone here, such as the former, and good Water. Here I saw the finest Crop of Indian Corn I ever have seen; the Stalks of which measured 18 Foot Long; and they told us, that the year before that had 800 Bushels of Corn off 9 Acres of that Land, and expected then to have so much. This Piece of good Land may contain 6 or 7000 Acres.

From hence we set out the next day, and in a Course of 16 or 18 miles most of our Way was Savanahs, not so wet as those the Day before; and more Pine Barrens that look'd a little better than those we had before seen; and some Spots of good Land, the largest about 2 or 200 Acres; and some Rice Swamps. These Rice Swamps are flat, low Grounds, by the Sides of Rivers or Runs, generally well cloathed with tall Timber and Canes underneath; some with Trees only, others all Cane; Some are by Rivers or Runs where the Tide comes, these are overflow'd every high Tide; others are above the Tide either far up the Rivers, or at the Heads of Runs. (such were those in our Way,) they are hardly ever quite dry, nor ever so wet as to hurt the Rice, unless it be a very wet Time indeed. In clearing these Swamps; they first cut down the Cane, and all the small Underbrush, and gather it in Heaps; then fall the Saplings and great Trees; the Branches of the Trees they generally lop off and burn with the Saplings, but let their Bodies lie and rot, the Logs being little minded because Rice is chiefly managed with the Hoe. They are most of them of a deep black Mould and are something Boggy. Towards night we got to the House of Mr. David Evans, late a Magistrate in New-Castle County upon Delaware: The Land he lives on is pretty good and the highest I saw in the Country, but there is only a small Body of it.

The next Day about Noon, we embark'd in a Canoo to return to Brunswick, accompanied by Mr. Evans and two others, having about 80 miles to row on the River Northeast, which is deep enough for a Sloop of 60 Tons all the Way, and would be navigable for such quite up to Mr. Evans's, were it not for the Multitude of Logs that lie in it, part of them fast in the Sand, with great Snags or Limbs and sometimes either End or the middle quite above, or but little beneath the Surface;

and in some Places we saw whole Heaps jambed together, almost from Side to Side, and so firm that they are immovable, being sound, heavy, fast and deep in the Sand, otherwise this would be a fine River, the Tide in a dry Time flowing some miles above Mr. Evans's. It is very crooked and deep, and from 10 to 15 Perches in the general Breadth of it. It is rare to find firm Land on both Sides, opposite; it being Swampy on one Side or the other; and often on both, and the Swamps very large, especially within 20 or 30 miles of its Entrance into Northwest. The water is of a dusky Complementation, and look much like high-coloured Malt Small-Beer, which is the general Hue of all the Waters, especially Rivers, of both North and South Carolina.

The Remainder in our next.

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MAY MEETING

of
BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Place: Camp Methodist Church
Shallotte, North Carolina
Date: May 13, 1963
Time: 8:00 P. M.

PROGRAM

Mr. Stanley A. South, archaeologist at Brunswick Town State Historic Site, will be the guest speaker, and has chosen as his topic, "The Indians of Brunswick County."

COMMITTEE ACTION

The Brunswick Town Preservation Committee opened a booth on March 30, at the historic site, where they will handle the sale of Historic Placemats, post cards, etc. Also, with a donation of at least \$.50, one will receive his choice of either a package of 200-year old china artifact or a package containing a 200-year old nail, found in the ruins of the town. Miss Sylvia Henson has been hired as hostess for the booth. She wears a costume of the Colonial period, in keeping with the Town. Everyone is cordially invited to visit the site and see the new addition.