



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOX 632, SHALLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. V, No. 1

January, 1965
FEB.

RUSSELLBOROUGH, CASTLE DOBBS, CASTLE TRYON AND BELLFONT The Royal Governor's Mansion at Brunswick

In 1758 Governor Arthur Dobbs purchased Russellborough and moved from New Bern to Brunswick. The two-story house with basement had been built by Captain John Russell, of his Majesty's Sloop "Scorpion", but evidently it was never finished. Dobbs did some work on the house to complete it and added various outbuildings. In moving to Brunswick Town, Dobbs was getting away from what he called the "aguish" town of New Bern and hoped to improve his health by the move. By 1762 his health had improved; and despite the fact that he was 73 years old, he fell in love with and married Miss Justina Davis, a fifteen year old resident of Brunswick. He changed the name of Russellborough to "Castle Dobbs".



After the death of Governor Dobbs in 1765, William Tryon moved into the vacant house and changed the name to "Castle Tryon". Mrs. Tryon spent considerable time cleaning the house, while the Governor wrote a friend and described the building as rectangular, built of wood, and measuring thirty-five by forty-five feet. Each story had four rooms and three closets. On the first floor was a parlour and drawing room. Governor Tryon was glad that a balustrade four feet high extended around both of the ten foot wide porches because it offered protection for his little girl. There was a stable and coach houses and other outbuildings, and nearby Tryon built a kitchen thirty by forty feet. A number of fruit trees were in the formal garden, which was shown on the 1769 map of the town, among which were peaches, nectars, figs, plums and apples, as well as vegetables and herbs.

Twice during Tryon's residence at Brunswick Town, his home was surrounded by armed citizens during the Stamp Act resistance. In November 1765, and again in February 1766, Tryon was placed under virtual house arrest by the angry citizens of the town who were protesting the Stamp Act. They compelled the officials at the courthouse to sign a statement that they would not execute any stamped paper in their various offices. During the five years (from 1765 to 1770) that Governor Tryon lived at "Castle Tryon", he was faced with a number of crises, including the one over the building of his new home in New Bern. When the move was made, "Castle Tryon" was purchased by William Dry of Brunswick Town, well known for his participation in the expulsion of the Spanish from the town in 1748 and for his part in the Stamp Act resistance. Again the name of the mansion was changed; and as the home of William Dry it became "Bellfont", which Josiah Quincy described as "the house of universal hospitality". In this home during the days just preceeding the Revolution, Colonel Dry often discussed his political views with the many important men of the day who came to call. One loyalist said of the "new system of politicks" that Mr. Dry "is the most zealous and talks treason by the hour".

Bellfont was destroyed by fire; and the *Virginia Gazette* of April 5, 1776, said that the elegant house was burned by Captain Collett, "destroying therein all the valuable furniture, liquors, etc...."

Since most of the houses in Brunswick excavated so far were burned after they had been abandoned, the excavation of the ruin of this house should be most interesting, since it was burned with its furnishings intact.

Stanley South, Archaeologist
Brunswick Town State Historic Site
N. C. Dept. of Archives & History

THE JOURNAL OF EBENEZER HAZARD
IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1777 and 1778

Edited by Hugh Buckner Johnston*

Ebenezer Hazard ¹(January 15, 1744/5-June 13, 1817) was a son of Samuel Hazard of Philadelphia; an educated merchant who had himself done considerable traveling. The younger Hazard was graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton) with the degree of M. A. in 1765. He worked in a New York bookshop until October 5, 1775, when he was appointed the local postmaster. A little over a year later he was appointed Surveyor (i.e., Inspector) by Postmaster General Richard Bache. Having orders to regulate the Continental postal route ² between Philadelphia and Savannah, Hazard made a preliminary trip to Edenton and back between May 15 and July 8, 1777, followed by a complete round trip to Savannah between October 8, 1777 to March 5, 1778.

* Mr. Hugh Buckner Johnston is Assistant Professor of Modern Foreign Languages at Atlantic Christian College, Wilson.

1 Dumas Malone and others (ed.), DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 22 volumes, Index volume, and Supplement One (XXI), and Supplement Two (XXII), 1928 -), VIII, 469-470.

2- It is of real importance to compare the North Carolina section of Hazard's route with the Colonial "Route from Suffolk in Virginia to the Boundary House of North and South Carolina on the Sea Coast," which was reported from Brunswick Town on January 3, 1766, in a letter from Governor William Tryon to Benjamin Barons, ESq., Deputy Post Master General for the Southern District.

	Miles
From Suffolk to Cottons Ferry on Chowan River	40
Appletree Ferry on the Roanoke.....	30
Salters on Tar or Pamlico River	35
Kemp's Ferry on Neuse do	28
Newbern	10
Trentbridge.....	13
Mrs. Warburton's	13
Snead's on New River Ferry	26
Sage's	13
Collins.....	14
Wilmington	15
Brunswick	15
The Ferry	2
To Bells	20
The Boundary House	23
Total Miles	<u>297</u>

William L. Saunders (ed.), THE COLONIAL RECORDS OF NORTH CAROLINA (Raleigh, 10 volumes, 1890), VII, 148-149.

The fact that Hazard was both intelligent and highly educated greatly increases the value and importance of the often detailed observations that he recorded in his two volume manuscript entitled "The Journal of Ebenezer Hazard." Fred Shelley suggests, in editing "The Journal of Ebenezer Hazard in Virginia, 1777",³ that the latter may have intended the two volumes as source material for the "American Geography" that he contemplated but never wrote. The leisureliness of Hazard's journey would have allowed him sufficient time and opportunity for collecting many of the basic documents on early American history that appeared some years later in his HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS.⁴

Hazard continued in the office of Postal Surveyor until his term as Postmaster General of the United States from January 28, 1782, to September 26, 1789. He visited a son at Huntsville, Alabama, in 1816 but does not appear to have taken any notes on that trip. The "Journal" was handed down in the family until 1945, when Spencer Hazard gave it to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.⁵

3- THE VIRGINIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY, LXII (Richmond, October, 1954), 400-423.

4- Ebenezer Hazard, HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 2 volumes, 1792 and 1794)

5- No. 1398 in the GUIDE TO THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA (Philadelphia, 1950)

January 12, 1778. Wilmington is a small Town situated in a sandy Hollow surrounded with Sand Hills; it lies upon the North Branch of Cape Fear River which is here about 300 Yards wide: it is the Capitol of New Hanover County. The River is defended by a Battery of 9 nine Pounders, and another of 8 Guns from 5 to 12 Prs. - Here are also two Iron Field Pieces on traveling Carriages. The Houses in Wilmington are mostly framed, and but indifferent Buildings. When Mrs. Tryon⁸⁰ was in North Carolina she desired the Ladies to address her, when they spoke or wrote to her, by the Title of her Excellency; and intimated that they ought to stand when in her Presence, alledging that as the Governor and his Lady were the Representatives of their Majesties, they ought to be treated with equal Ceremony. - People in North Carolina differ much respecting Gov. Tryon's Conduct in the affair of the Regulators; some blame him and some them, and some both of them; but all agree that Col. Fanning⁸¹ was at the Bottom of it: they say that he insisted upon and took

80- Margaret Wake of London married Capt. William Tryon in 1757. She possessed a tidy dowry of £ 30,000. Dill, TRYON'S PALACE, 6.

81 - The career of Coloney Edmund Fanning received considerable attention in Marshall DeLancey Haywood, GOVERNOR WILLIAM TRYON (Raleigh, 1903), hereinafter cited as Haywood, GOVERNOR TRYON.

larger fees than the Law allowed; & that when he was in the Back Country he took Money from them for Lands of which he promised to procure Grants for them, but neither did it nor returned the Money; & when they complained to the Gov. for Redress, he told them he would believe Col. Fanning's Word sooner than their Oath. -

The following Instance of Gov. Tryon's Cruelty has been mentioned by every Person with whom I have conversed about the Regulators.

There was one Merol⁸² (see March 27th), a Rifle-maker by trade, from whom some of the Regulators purchased thir Rifles; upon their saying they bought them to him, the Man was apprehended as belonging to their Body, & tho' no further Proof of it appeared against him he was hanged. He left behind him a Wife & eleven Children. Staid in Wilmington till the 16th. when I crossed the Ferry, rode over a dismal, swampy Island, (which seems to be a Haunt for Herons & Turkey Buzzards) of about a Mile & a Quarter wide, crossed a Ferry over Northwest River (about 150 Yards wide) & lodged, not far from the Bank of it, at Mrs. Eagan's.⁸³

The Weather has been rather cool, & there have been two pretty smart Frosts since the 11th.

Saw Capt. Willm. Robeson.⁸⁴ - There is a Causeway across the Island, but it is in very bad order.

- 82 - Hazard's informant offered a confused account of Captain Benjamin Merrill who was hanged by Governor Tryon and was survived by a wife and only eight children. Haywood, GOVERNOR TRYON, 147-148.
- 83 - James Eagan died in Bladen County early in 1738, leaving a wife and daughter. Grimes, ABSTRACT OF WILLS, 106. The surname was not listed in that county in the 1790 Census.
- 84 - William Robeson represented Pitt County at the Halifax Provincial Congress on April 4, 1776. Wheeler, HISTORICAL SKETCHES, I, 78 and 86.

January 17, 1778 Agreeable Weather early in the Morning, but rather cool; rode over a Causeway 3 Miles long: - it is in bad Order. - Took a "short Cut" to save 12 miles Riding - Memorandum. Take no more short Cuts in North Carolina. - Had to cross two Mill Dams & met with great Difficulty. Rode through a very gloomy Cypress Swamp: - lost my Way. - Saw Palmettos growing; they look like Fans. - Crossed Town Creek at Davis's Ferry; ⁸⁵ - very narrow. - Met with a Man at Davis's of the Name of Leonard; ⁸⁶ - a Relation of the Leonards at Princeton; ⁸⁷ fortunately, for men, he was going to Lockwood's Folly. We rode in Company. After riding 2 miles reached one Potter's: ⁸⁸ did not see him: he is said to be very sensible but married to a Mulatto Woman. The Corn there was mouldy. My Horse would not eat it. Got a Draught of YELLOW Water at this rascally House: it afforded nothing better. Was caught in the Rain here, & had to stay till 2 O'clock P. M. - Very cloudy all the rest of the Day.

From Potter's to the Widow Mills's is 12 Miles, & not a House all the Way. The Road is nothing more than a Foot Path, & runs through Swamps & wet Savannahs (or Heaths) for the most Part. In one of the Swamps the Water came up to my SaddleSkirts. If Mr. Leonard had not been with me I certainly should have returned to Mrs. Eagen's; for the Swamps had so terrible an appearance that I should not have ventured through them. Mrs. Mills House ⁸⁹ looked so badly that I would not stop there, especially as I was but 5 miles from Lockwood's Folly, & the Sun began to appear in such a Manner as to induce me to think I might get to the Folly before it rained.

- 85 - Mouzon's Map of 1775 shows Davis's Ferry on Old Town Creek. In 1790, Thomas Davis of Brunswick County was listed with seven whites and thirty-five blacks. CENSUS OF 1790, 189.
- 86 - The Brunswick County Census of 1790 listed Henry Leonard with five whites, Eleanor Leonard with nine whites and ten slaves, and Samuel Leonard with five whites and two slaves. CENSUS of 1790, 189.
- 87 - Lockwood's Folly Inlet and Creek lie between Southport and Shalotte. As early as December 18, 1743, William Rigby bequeathed land on Lockwood's Folly. Grimes, ABSTRACT OF WILLS, 314-315.
- 88 - James Potter had a family of seven persons in Brunswick County in 1790. CENSUS OF 1790, 189.
- 89 - In 1790, Jane Mills of Brunswick County had herself, one male under sixteen, and three slaves. CENSUS OF 1790, 189.

In my way saw 5 or 6 wild Deer run across the Road. The Wind has been very high the most of the Day. - A vicious Mare which Mr. Leonard led, kicked at my Horse as she passed him; she was very near hitting my Leg: had she done it, I think she must have broke it. - Could get no Fodder for my Horse last Night; - instead of it he had MARSH HAY, which is a Composition of Weeds & the wildest Kind of Grass imaginable; - he would not eat it. - He would have been a Fool if he had. - Lodged at Bell's at Lockwood's Folly, a mean looking House where both I & my Horse had plenty with Civility. Mrs. Bell⁹⁰ is from near Montock at the East End of Long Island: her maiden name was Parsons. - Lockwood's Folly is a Creek which empties into the Sea: it gets its Name from one Lockwood who mistook it for Cape Fear Inlet, & lost his Vessel. Crossed it by a Bridge near Bell's. - But little Rain before Bed Time, but the Wind excessively high. Mrs. Eagen's House (where I lodged last Night) had many Panes in the Windows broke; each of these was stopped up with a Bunch of Moss. Sultry the most of the Day.

January 18, 1778 Rained, & blew excessively hard in the Night. Fine clear Weather this Morning. As I understood I could get no Corn on the Road I took some with me, & fed my Horse in the Woods. No House for 9 Miles, & after that none within 13. - No Tavern at present in 26 miles. Sandy Road. Crossed Little River in South Carolina by a Bridge. Lodged at Mr. Verreen's⁹¹, a private Public House in Craven District. Neither ate nor drank from the Time I first set out this Morning till I reached Verreen's.

90 - She must have been the wife of James Bell, Sr. who was listed in Brunswick County in 1790 with himself, two females, and nine slaves. CENSUS OF 1790, 189.

91 - Mouzon's Map of 1775 shows the Vareen (sic) place about a mile below the present Little River, and two or three miles north of Conway, South Carolina. "Old William" Verreen owned one plantation on Little River and another further inland.

The preceding material was an excerpt from THE NORTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL REVIEW, July, 1959.