



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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A CRISIS AT BRUNSWICK TOWN

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A ready made crisis was waiting for William Tryon when he took office as Royal Governor of North Carolina in 1765. In Wilmington the stamp master William Houston had been forced to resign his office, and an effigy was hung in protest to the Stamp Act. When the sloop "Diligence" arrived at Port Brunswick with a cargo of stamps to be sold for affixing on various documents, the people were determined not to buy them, and the stamps remained on board the vessel. The courts could not function without these official documents, resulting in a tense situation on the Cape Fear in November 1765.

This state of affairs continued until after the first of the year when three ships, the "Dobbs", owned by Richard Quince of Brunswick, the "Patience", and later the "Ruby" entered the harbor at Brunswick without stamped papers. When the cargoes were not allowed to be unloaded because of lack of proper papers, Cornelius Harnett and George Moore went to "Castle Tryon" on February 19th and spoke with Governor Tryon about releasing the cargoes of the ships. They were determined to force the release of the ships, and placed Governor Tryon under house arrest until the matter could be settled. During the night a group of men broke into the home of William Dry and took the clearance papers for the ships from his desk. The next morning the "inhabitants in arms", as Tryon called them, went to the ship "Viper" with the papers and demanded release of the ship's cargo. It was agreed that one ship could be unloaded, but before the day was out other cargo was being carried ashore, much to the displeasure of Governor Tryon. Some five hundred "citizens in arms" had seen to it that they had their way in one of the first acts of armed resistance to British authority in America.



DISCUSSING THE STAMP ACT

The cargoes were being unloaded, and the citizens had won their point, but there was still unfinished business to carry out. The officials in Brunswick Town had not actually signed statements promising not to sign or execute any stamped papers in the colony, as Houston had been forced to do in Wilmington. With this in mind, the group looked for Pennington, the Comptroller of Port Brunswick, whom they especially wished to have sign such a promise. They discovered that he had fled to safety at "Castle Tryon". The group marched on Tryon's home again, five hundred and eighty of them carrying arms and a hundred without. Surrounding the house they waited while Cornelius Harnett went to the door. When he faced Tryon he said that the people were determined to take Pennington out of the house by force if necessary, but they hoped this insult to Tryon would not be necessary. Tryon answered that they had offered insult enough by making him in effect a prisoner in his own house.

Pennington left the house, resigning his office before he left at the insistence of Tryon. The group then went to Brunswick Town, and there, probably in front of the courthouse, they compelled the clerk of court, William Dry the Collector, and Pennington the Comptroller, as well as all the lawyers, to sign the statement that they would not sign or execute any stamped paper in the execution of their various offices.

With this, the work of the citizens of the Cape Fear was done, and they retired to their homes with the knowledge that at Brunswick they had used force of arms against the Royal Governor of North Carolina, and had come away victorious. The memory of this success would remain with them in the years to come when the colonists would again take up arms against the king during the birth of a new nation.

THE LOWER CAPE FEAR IN COLONIAL DAYS.

BY

DR. LAWRENCE LEE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS, 334 PAGES. \$6.00

FROM ALL TRAINED HISTORIANS, DR. LAWRENCE LEE'S BOOK ENTITLED THE LOWER CAPE FEAR IN COLONIAL DAYS WILL WIN THE HIGHEST PRAISE. IT IS A FULLY DOCUMENTED AND COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT OF ALL PHASES OF HISTORY, WRITTEN IN AN EASY, LUCID STYLE, WHICH GIVES A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENTS AND THE AREA SURROUNDING THE CAPE FEAR RIVER BEFORE NORTH CAROLINA BECAME A STATE. DR. LEE, A NATIVE OF WILMINGTON, IS NOW A PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AT THE CITADEL IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA. IT WAS HE WHO FOSTERED THE ORIGINAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AT BRUNSWICK TOWN STATE HISTORIC SITE. HE STUDIED UNDER DR. HUGH T. LEFLER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, TO WHOM HE GIVES CREDIT FOR THE SCHOLARLY STIMULATION FOR WRITING THIS VOLUME.

STUDENTS OF HISTORY WILL FIND IT AN INVALUABLE SOURCE FOR THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF NOT ONLY PART OF COLONIAL NORTH CAROLINA, BUT ALSO PART OF COLONIAL SOUTH CAROLINA. THE FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY WILL ASSIST THEM GREATLY IN FURTHER RESEARCH.

TO THE AVERAGE READER, THE BOOK WILL BE INTERESTING AND ESPECIALLY SO, TO THOSE ACQUAINTED WITH THE CAPE FEAR REGION. IT IS A MOST COMPLETE AND WELL-WRITTEN HISTORY OF WHICH THEY CAN BE PARTICULARLY PROUD, SINCE FEW SUCH LOCAL HISTORIES OF THIS HIGH CALIBER EXIST.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS NEW PUBLICATION IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE AS A TYPICAL AND INTEGRAL PART OF OUR NATIONAL HISTORY. ALTHOUGH THE LIMITATIONS OF THE MATERIAL MAY SEEM SMALL IN TIME AND PLACE, IT IS ONLY FROM A KNOWLEDGE AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF SUCH DETAILS THAT ONE CAN TRULY COMPREHEND THE COMPLETE STORY OF OUR COUNTRY. PARTICULARLY IS THIS TRUE OF THE LOWER CAPE FEAR BECAUSE IT WAS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF THE FOUNDING, SETTLING, AND EXPLOITING OF COLONIAL POSSESSIONS BY THE MOTHER COUNTRY IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES. AS DR. LEE SAID, THIS MAY BE REGARDED AS A "CASE STUDY" AND IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT IN ANY SURVEY OF THE BRITISH MERCANTILE SYSTEM OF THAT TIME AS WELL AS A SIGNIFICANT CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. THE AUTHOR ALSO STATED IN THE PREFACE THAT THIS BOOK IS LIKE FOCUSING A LIGHT ON A SMALL PORTION OF THE TAPESTRY IN WHICH IS WOVEN THE STORY OF MANKIND.

ONE OF THE MANY COMMENDABLE ASPECTS OF THE BOOK IS THE WAY THE AUTHOR NEVER LETS ONE FORGET THAT THIS HISTORY IS A PART OF THE WHOLE. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE FULLER PICTURE OF THIS TAPESTRY, DR. LEE PRESENTS AND CONNECTS EVERY EVENT, PUTTING IT INTO THE PROPER PROSPECTIVE SO THAT EVEN THOSE WITH SCANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOUNDING OF OUR COUNTRY CAN UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE IMPACT EACH DETAIL HAS HAD AND HOW EACH FITS INTO THE LARGER PICTURE.

THIS IS EVIDENT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOK WHICH PRESENTS AN ALMOST POETIC DESCRIPTION OF THE LAND OF SOUTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA. THE SPANISH HAD FIRST CLAIMED THE AREA THROUGH THE EXPLORATIONS OF COLUMBUS. IN 1497 ENGLAND THROUGH THE VOYAGES OF JOHN CABOT ADVANCED HER CLAIM. LESS THAN THIRTY YEARS LATER, VERRANZO UNDER THE FRENCH FLAG CLAIMED IT FOR A THIRD COUNTRY; AND AFTER ACTUALLY EXPLORING PART OF THE LAND, HE WROTE THE FIRST KNOWN DESCRIPTION OF THE REGION. SUCH WAS THE INTERNATIONAL BEGINNING OF EUROPEAN INTEREST THERE.

FOLLOWING THIS, CAROLINA ITSELF WAS FIRST DESIGNATED WHEN THE KING OF ENGLAND GRANTED IT TO SIR ROBERT HEATH; HOWEVER, HIS HOPES TO DEVELOP THE PROVINCE NEVER MATERIALIZED. WORLD HISTORY IS AGAIN REFLECTED ALONG THE CAPE FEAR WHEN THE DYNAMIC PERIOD AFTER THE RESTORATION BROUGHT GREATER GLORY TO ENGLAND. AT THIS TIME THE KING OF ENGLAND, WITH WORLD POWER ENOUGH TO CLAIM THE AREA FOR HIS OWN, GAVE IT TO EIGHT OF HIS SUPPORTERS WHO CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE LORDS PROPRIETORS. WHEN THEY WERE GRANTED CAROLINA, EXPLORATION AND PLANS WITH A VIEW TOWARD COLONIZATION HAD ALREADY BEGUN. IT WAS JOHN VASSALL, WHO IN 1664 BROUGHT THE FIRST EUROPEAN SETTLERS TO A COLONY ON THE CAPE FEAR RIVER WHICH THEY CALLED CLARENDON. THIS WAS ABANDONED WITHIN THREE YEARS, THE LORDS PROPRIETORS SEEMINGLY MORE INTERESTED IN THE ALBEMARLE AREA TO THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH CAROLINA SETTLEMENTS BELOW THE CAPE FEAR.

APPARENTLY THE OCCUPATION BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS WAS BY ERRATIC MOVEMENTS OF PEOPLE FROM THESE ADJACENT COLONIES. AMONG THEM WERE THE MOORES, WHO HAD COME FROM THE TERRITORY TO THE SOUTH. ABOUT 1726, ONE OF THIS FAMILY, MAURICE MOORE, FOUNDED THE TOWN OF BRUNSWICK, NAMING IT IN HONOR OF THE REIGNING GEORGE I, WHO WAS OF THE GERMAN HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK-HANOVER. BRUNSWICK AND WILMINGTON, WHICH WAS FOUNDED LATER, PERHAPS IN 1733, AND WHICH OUTGREW THE OLDER TOWN, WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT URBAN DISTRICTS OF THE LOWER CAPE FEAR.

LIKE MANY OF THE EVENTS OF THE PAST, THE BEGINNING OF PERMANENT SETTLEMENTS HERE AND OVER MOST OF THE UNITED STATES WAS UNRECORDED. DRAMATIC INCIDENTS LIKE THE ARRIVAL OF THE IMMIGRANTS AT JAMESTOWN AND PLYMOUTH WERE NOT ACTUALLY TYPICAL OF THE WAY MOST OF AMERICA WAS SETTLED. ONE MAY READILY OBSERVE, THEREFORE, THAT AGAIN THIS TERRITORY IS A BETTER "CASE STUDY" FOR THE BASIS OF OUR NATIONAL HISTORY THAN ARE SOME OF THE MORE PICTURESQUE SITUATIONS THAT ARE NEVER OMITTED IN OUR NATIONAL HISTORIES. FURTHERMORE, ONE MAY REALIZE THAT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE RESIDENTS OF THE LOWER CAPE FEAR REACTED TO THEIR COLONIAL GOVERNMENT, ITS TAXES, AND ITS TRADE RESTRICTIONS; AND LATER PARTICIPATED IN THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM WAS TYPICAL OF THE ROLE THE AVERAGE COLONIST AT HOME PLAYED IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

THUS, THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY HISTORY IS PRESENTED THOROUGHLY AND IS CLEARLY RELATED TO THE LARGER HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY. SIMILARLY, OTHER CHAPTERS DISCUSS THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE ALONG THE CAPE FEAR. FASCINATING ACCOUNTS OF THE RED MEN, THE PIRATES INCLUDING THE NOTORIOUS BLACKBEARD, THE FIELDS AND THE FORESTS FROM WHICH WERE PRODUCED NAVAL STORES-- THEIR MOST VALUABLE EXPORT--AND THE PATHS OF COMMERCE ALL DESCRIBE THE EFFORTS OF THESE COLONISTS TO EARN A LIVING. THE VARIOUS NATIONALITIES OF THE PEOPLE, THEIR MEAGER EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, THEIR SLAVES, THEIR ENTERTAINMENT, AND THEIR RELIGION ARE LIKEWISE SET FORTH IN INTERESTING DETAIL.

FOR AN ILLUSTRATION LET US COMMENT ON THE CHAPTER ENTITLED "THE SEARCH FOR SALVATION." AS A BRITISH COLONY, NORTH CAROLINA WAS THEORETICALLY UNDER THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, BUT THE PEOPLE FOLLOWED THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETATION OF VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS. THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS WAS A MISSIONARY ORGANIZATION SUPPORTED BY THE ANGLICAN CHURCH. IT HELPED IN A SMALL WAY TO SUPPORT THE MINISTER IN THE CAPE FEAR COLONIES, BUT THEIR FINANCIAL CONDITION WAS TOO SCANTY TO ACQUIRE AND PROVIDE FOR CAPABLE MINISTERS. AT LEAST, AS THE AUTHOR STATED, THOUGH VARIED THE MINISTERS WERE IN PERSONALITY AND ABILITY, THEY SHARED ONE MAJOR CHARACTERISTIC--THE DETERMINATION TO PERSEVERE UNDER EXTREME DIFFICULTIES WHICH CONSTITUTED THEIR PARISHES. ONE WONDERS IF THEIR PARISHIONERS WERE NOT MORE CONCERNED WITH MAKING A LIVING ON EARTH RATHER THAN LIVING HEREAFTER. ONE PREACHER NOT ONLY HAD TO HOLD SERVICES AT HIS HOME BUT ALSO AFTERWARDS HAD TO ENTERTAIN THE ENTIRE CONGREGATION AT DINNER! TWO OF THE EARLIEST CHURCHES BUILT WERE ST. JAMES IN WILMINGTON AND ST. PHILIPS, AT BRUNSWICK. EVEN THEN THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO MADE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR ONE MINISTER WHO TRIED TO SERVE BOTH, FOR AS HE WROTE, "BY OBLIGING ONE OF THE TOWNS HE MUST, OF COURSE, DISOBLIGE THE OTHER, EACH OF THEM OPPOSING THE OTHER TO THE UTMOST OF THEIR POWER." IN THE ABSENCE OF MINISTERS, FUNERAL SERVICES AS WELL AS MARRIAGES WERE CONDUCTED BY A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE.

OTHER DENOMINATIONS IN THE CAPE FEAR AREA INCLUDED QUAKERS AND BAPTISTS, ALSO REFERRED TO AS ANABAPTISTS, THE LATTER BEING THE LARGER GROUP. PERHAPS SOME INDIVIDUALS FOLLOWED THE PRESBYTERIAN, METHODIST, OR OTHER FAITH; HOWEVER, NO RECORD EXISTS OF SUCH ORGANIZED GROUPS IN THE LOWER CAPE FEAR TERRITORY UNTIL AFTER THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

MORE SHOULD BE SAID ALSO ABOUT NAVAL STORES WHICH WERE THE BASIS OF THE ECONOMY OF THIS REGION. AS ENGLAND'S MAJOR SOURCE OF TAR AND PITCH, THIS COLONY WAS DEFINITELY VALUABLE TO THE BRITISH. MOREOVER, THEY SUPPLIED LUMBER AND TURPENTINE, ALL OF WHICH GREAT BRITAIN NEEDED TO BUILD AND OUTFIT ENOUGH SHIPS IN KEEPING WITH HER GROWING SEA POWER. IN ADDITION, THIS COLONY SERVED AS A NON-COMPETITIVE MARKET FOR MANUFACTURED GOODS FROM ENGLAND.

OBVIOUSLY, THE LOWER CAPE FEAR LANDS WERE AMONG ENGLAND'S PRIZED POSSESSIONS. FOR A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF A BRITISH COLONY WITH ITS INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCE AND FOR EXCELLENT BACKGROUND DATA FOR AMERICAN HISTORY, THIS VOLUME IS A DELIGHTFUL AND INFORMATIVE SOURCE. INCLUDED IN ITS MOST ATTRACTIVE FORMAT ARE FIVE FASCINATING MAPS. ALL WHO SHARE THE HERITAGE OF THE LOWER CAPE FEAR SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO DR. LEE, WHOSE MASTERPIECE IS MORE THAN MERE LOCAL HISTORY.

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NOVEMBER MEETING
OF
BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PLACE: WOODBURN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WOODBURN, NORTH CAROLINA
DATE: NOVEMBER 8, 1965
TIME: 8:00 O'CLOCK P. M.

PROGRAM

THE BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MET MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8, AT 8:00 P. M. AT WOODBURN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. DR. STANLEY A. SOUTH WAS OUR GUEST SPEAKER FOR THE OCCASION. HE LECTURED ON THE STAMP DEFIANCE AT BRUNSWICK TOWN. HE ALSO SHOWED COLOR SLIDES ON HIS RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY WORK AT BETHAHARA NEAR WINSTON-SALEM. THIS WAS THE SITE OF THE FIRST MORAVIAN SETTLEMENT IN NORTH CAROLINA, NOVEMBER 17, 1753. THIS PROGRAM WAS ENJOYED THOROUGHLY BY THE MEMBERS PRESENT.

NEWSLETTER NEEDS YOUR ASSISTANCE

THE NEWSLETTER IS YOUR PAPER AS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY. ANYONE WHO HAS INFORMATION CONCERNING OLD DOCUMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTIFACTS (INDIAN AND COLONIAL) OR OTHER PERTINENT MATERIAL WHICH MIGHT BE USED IN THIS NEWSLETTER, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO SEND THEM TO "NEWSLETTER", BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P. O. BOX 22, WINNABOW, NORTH CAROLINA.

R. V. ASBURY, JR., EDITOR