



NEWSLETTER



BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BRUNSWICK TOWN, P.O. BOX 356, SOUTHPORT, N.C.



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BRUNSWICK COUNTY'S BICENTENNIAL

"It was hoped that the projects would fulfill a County need, would offer an opportunity to reflect or would simply celebrate the glory of Brunswick County and its people as part of America."
M. Gornto

The History of Brunswick County,
Dr. Lawrence Lee

Historical Drama open-air
musical "Revolution!"
premiered June 29, 1976

Re-inactment of the Arrival
of the News of the Battle
of Lexington, May 10, 1975

Cantata "I Love America"
John Peterson
Don Wyrzten

Bicentennial mini-festival
March 27, 28, 1976

Colonial games for children
N. C. 4th of July Festival

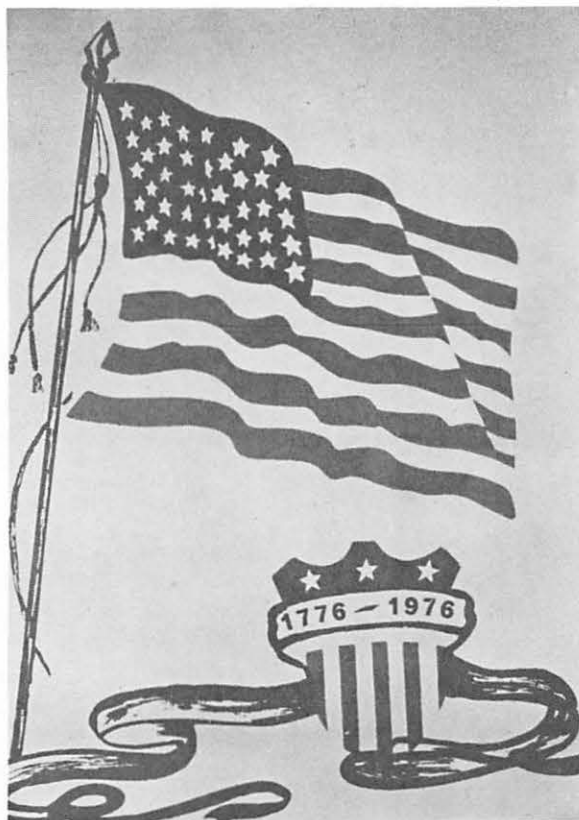
Annual County-wide
Clean-up Campaign

Slide Collection of
County Landmarks

Bicentennial Youth Debate

Church History

Photographic Heritage
Contest



Armed Services
Bicentennial Caravan,
March 27, 28, 1976

Tape File Recollections
of Older Citizens

Historical Marker —
The Boundary House.

Library Building
for Shallotte

Library Forum
three "town meetings"

Art Shows — 1975 and 1976

Cemetery Cataloging

Essay Contest for
School Children

Architectural Preservation Commission

Flying the American Flag

"The Bicentennial in Brunswick County has been worthwhile.
It has been effective.

The Bicentennial in Brunswick County was Something Great!"

Mary Gornto, Executive Director, ARBC-BC

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

One of the most illuminating projects developed during Brunswick County's Bicentennial is the Tape File Recollections of Older Citizens. This verbal record affords a tremendous opportunity to take a personal glimpse into the trends and ideas of a bygone era. The stories our citizens tell are creating an invaluable collection of folklore sure to be cherished now and in future generations.

These taped interviews are being transcribed and upon completion will be accessible through The Visitor's Center at Brunswick Town State Historic Site. Introducing this project are some fascinating memories of Margaret Swan Hood as she recounts her experiences in Southport and at Bald Head Island.

Jane Shetterly, editor

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Excerpts from the Interview with Margaret Swan Hood

interviewer: Mary M. Gornto

MMG: To start with you are to tell me your name, including your maiden name.

MSH: I am Margaret Swan Hood, and I was born July the 16th, 1900. So I'm 76 years old.

MMG: Where were you born?

MSH: I was born at a lighthouse station on the Tola Beach, Florida. And that time it was called The Mosquito Inlet lighthouse. It was really an island, so I was born on an island.

MMG: Your father must have been a lighthouse keeper.

MSH: My father was Captain Charlie Swan and he was a lighthouse keeper, and he served as a lighthouse keeper for 42 years. And we lived on Bald Head Island for 30 years of that 42...

My father was the first captain- he had two assistant keepers. When the lighthouse was commissioned my daddy turned the light on the first time for actual service, The Cape Fear Lighthouse, 4th day of August, 1903.

MMG: Do you remember what year he came to Bald Head?

MSH: Yes, he came to Bald Head on August 3, 1903, and I was 3 years old the July before we came.

MMG: Where were your parents from originally?

MSH: My grandfather Swan was born in Oslo, Norway, and my grandmother Swan was born in Nassau. She was a daughter of a plantation owner down in Nassau. She was an English girl. And my mother's father was born in Genoa, Italy, and her mother was born in Cork, Ireland. So I had four different nationalities just one generation alone.

MMG: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MSH: There was 10 with the two families- there was 7 of my mother's children, and then my daddy remarried and had three. My mother was 41 years old when she died and left seven children. She had an illness and she died in December 17, 1915. I was the oldest, and I was just 15 years old the fall before she died that winter.

MMG: What are your memories of growing up on Bald Head?

MSH: Well, that's the most beautiful part of my life in a way. I was just 3 years old when we moved there in August, and my first memory was of when they started tearing the buildings down where the workmen had lived during the construction of the lighthouse. They had torn down this house and I, a little girl of course, ran up on the hill and got in amongst the lumber and things and stuck a nail in my foot, a rusty nail, and that's my very first memory. I can remember my daddy taking a sterilized needle and picking the rust out. And they brought me over to Southport, and Doctor Arthur Doshier had just become practicing physician, a very young man at that time, and I was one of his first patients...

MSH: When we moved over there in 1903 they had a tramway from one end of the island to the other with one of these pushcarts on it. Tires and railings and all where they had mules hauling the materials up for the building of the installation on the other end of the island...

But we'd ride on these, on the carts back and forth. Our boats that we used to come to town were in the creeks up near the Lighthouse you see, and we had that tramway there for about 10 years, 8 or 10 years after we lived there.

MSH: We very often would go way up here 3 miles to the bay, Buzzard Bay, and get clams. We'd dig clams and we were so little we couldn't carry them and we had these big towbogs we called them and one would take one corner of it and drag 'em. We'd drag them home, we just knew about how many to get, how many we could manage to get home...

We had a pond that we called the Crab Pond and whenever we wanted crabs, mama or papa would say, "Let's have some crabs for supper, you children go to get them". We had to go about a mile down the beach over in this pond where the water went in from the ocean at tide and that was the breeding place for the best crabs. We knew just how many dozens to dip, you know, and we'd go dragging the little bag on home. So we just had a beautiful lunch on Bald Head Island.

MMG: Did you ever kill the turtles to make turtle soup?

MSH: We killed a turtle a year and divided it with the people on the island. Papa would kill one turtle a year. We had turtles marked that we'd watch from year to year when they'd come back, and there was one turtle that layed on that beach for about 15 years. It had one fin cut off, we'd watch for her trail. If we missed seeing her we'd know by her trail, she'd go crooked and you'd know how long that turtle lived.

MSH: My first memories of Southport was when we had to come to town we had to sail, there was no motorboats and we went on the east end of the island which made a long narrow creek with alot of turns and curves in it- it took hours to get over that creek. And we sailed to Southport, which wasn't very often, I guess maybe we came to mainland about twice a year.

MSH: But we used to visit over here and we would be fascinated, I would, because I've always been a very curious person as a child. But I'd be fascinated by the lamplighters. They'd come around just at dusk and light these little lamps and they were about every two blocks, you know, around in Southport. They'd come in the morning and turn them off and then sometime during the day they'd come by and clean the shades and put the kerosene back in them. Then along about dusk, you'd see the man, Coop Jones was the last one, the last lamplighter. Mr. Peterson, I think, had it for years and years until he got real old. And then Coop Jones, city employee that worked very closely with Cecil Lewis, our policeman, and you'd see Coop going around at night lighting those lights, and I said that I was so glad that I'd live the day, the time that I could see that.

MSH: As a little girl I didn't have too much recreation myself but I always liked to be around to see what was going on with the older women, you know, and every afternoon for years and years after you ate supper in the summertime everybody would go to the garrison. You'd see the women in the white and the long skirts and the blouses. I was just a little girl of course, and I loved to get in the crowd because I lived on Bald Head and there wasn't any crowds. And they'd sit on the grass and the men would come, and they had benches all along. First ones there got the benches, but of course the ladies would sit down on the ground with their white clothes on. There'd be oh the most people down there and it would just be beautiful to go just after dark set in and there was one or two of the lamplighter's lights on...

We'd play games, run and sing, while the old people visited. The mothers would take their children, it was just the ritual of every night. Then in the summer the brigade boys would come down. Now the little fellows would come first and then the young boys, The Boys Brigade, and of course the girls in town would have a fit.

MMG: Where did they come from?

MSH: From Wilmington and they stayed two weeks. And we'd have the biggest time in there waiting for the boys to come; little boys, we were after the little boys, you know.

MMG: They stayed at the garrison?

MSH: Stayed in tents, all around the garrison in tents.

MMG: What was the garrison used for in those days?

MSH: They used the building house, the captain of the engineer dredge was living in them when we moved to town. In fact they did for years and years.

MMG: Was it used as a library?

MSH: Well, the wing on this end was the first library. When we moved to town it was a library because I'd go and get my mother books. So that was started by the women's club. In 1910 or 1912 the Women's Club organized that library.

MSH: But you know, Southport always had a 4th of July celebration, and we always came to the 4th of July celebration. And that time papa had gotten a little motor boat.

MMG: Where did you stay when you came?

MSH: We stayed with Mrs. S. Watts or Miss Price, one of the two friends, and the women were to have great big tables of baked goods and of course they used alot of trimmings for the 4th of July. You know I'm a great booster of that. I like to see red, white and blue everywhere and they'd have it just flowing everyplace...

We'd usually come over early the 4th, and they'd have the flags, all the flags up on the garrison, the alphabet, flags of the ships with the American flag flying. And we'd watch for it, and we were thrilled to death, and papa would just buy us anything we wanted. They had big tubs of pink lemonnade...

great big tubs with long handles and dippers and we'd think we were in heaven for sure on 4th of July. And the band, the brass band from Caswell was here- they would play and they would build a big platform underneath the grove, course that was all open, there was no shrubbery or anything in there. They'd build this great big platform...

the speakers would get on that and talk, that was up in the grove. And after the speakers got off they'd go in there with pecks of cornmeal, now listen to this, and sprinkle over all those boards, that whole thing, and they'd make it as slick and that was the dance hall for the night, for the dances. You know the ballrooms are usually waxed. Cornmeal just pecks of it. And they'd run over, they'd take something, and mash it down, like a roller thing or something, and then sweep it off and it was the smoothest floor you ever saw. And that brass band- they had built a frame for them- from Fort Caswell played for those dances and you talk about something beautiful. Japanese lanterns, great big ones like that strung all the way around and all across with candles in them...

We were young, but we'd stand and listen and my mother loved music and we'd love to go up there and hear that band and see those pretty

dresses. I can see them now. The Newton's and the St. George's and the bustles and all with these pretty white demity dresses or pink and blue, real flowing, big ruffle collars and beads, and dangling ear bobs and things- it was just beautiful. Flowers in their hair, you know they had lots of hair, and I can think about it now- that was really a happy time...

They had a motor boat race the 4th of July and papa won the race, \$5.00, that was a big deal. Won that race and of course we kids were on the garrison just jumping right up and down and hollering you know, watching papa going up around the buoys

MMG: So you remember what other games you played during the 4th of July?

MSH: Sack races, they had sack races and greased pig and a greased pole, that kind of thing. I can remember those boys running after those greased pigs...

And the bobbing apples, of course those kind of things come along about Halloween time. You know they'd have parties around for the children.

MMG: Did the children dress up in masks at Halloween?

MSH: Yes. We used to have a thing that we called going koonering. Did you ever hear that? You'd put masks on and go and knock on peoples doors and they could not guess who you were and it used to go on all weather here...

I remember the women and the men would do it, and I remember one time we were visiting Mrs. Price and this knock came on the door and here came in two men and two women. And they had these masks on, dressed with these masks on, and they'd make a funny sound, change their voices, and we couldn't guess to save our lives who they were and it tickled we kids so much. You know we'd never seen anything like this before, and of course everybody just died laughing.

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NOVEMBER MEETING

DATE: Monday, November 8, 1976

TIME: 8:00 P.M.

PLACE: Brunswick Town Visitor's Center

PROGRAM: "Colonial Ornithology"
Dr. and Mrs. Tipton, speakers