



# NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOX 874, SHALLOTTE, N. C. 28459

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## TELEPHONE SERVICE IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY

Elbert H. Gray

In the year of our Lord 1954, while serving in my first year as Brunswick County Sheriff, I was asked by Roddy Bennett of Exum to stop by and see Cecil Robbins of Winnabow. I stopped by to see Cecil and he informed me that he and a group had an inquiry about obtaining funds from the Rural Electricity Administration in Washington, D.C., to start telephone service in Brunswick County. He had been informed there was plenty of funds for loan and that the Eisenhower Administration was anxious for it to come in the South.

We made contact with the Rural Electrification Administration in Raleigh. The Director, whose name I can't recall and who had served in the General Assembly with Harry Mintz, Jr., came to see me and Cecil Robbins. He gave us instructions on how to organize and form the Membership Corporation. We contacted Southern Bell Telephone in Wilmington who owned the franchise for Brunswick. They had two public telephones in Shallotte - one in Fred Mintz's Coastal Drug Store and the other in a phone booth on the east side of R.D. White Coast Road Service Station. Bell Telephone said they were not going to exercise their franchise. They stated that if we formed the Membership Corporation they would sell their franchise for a token fee of one dollar.

Cecil Robbins and I discussed the conditions that had always existed in Brunswick County such as partisan politics and sectionalism for over a hundred years. We decided that I would have to be very discrete in methods of operation and be careful in the selection of participants. It was understood that Cecil Robbins would attend the organizational meeting. I then went and invited A.P. Henry of Winnabow, who is now a Director. By the way, these facts I'm telling to the Society now, I told to A.P. Henry when he visited me in Log Angeles earlier this year.

I then went to Bolivia and invited Foster Mintz, who is now President. Wilson Arnold of Supply was invited and he is now a Director. In the next several days Harry Mintz, Jr., the first President and Elbert Pigott of Gause Landing, a Director, were invited.

I went to the home of Joe Stanaland of Waccamaw, the present Secretary and Treasurer, and invited him. He had just returned from Whiteville where he took his wife to see the doctor. Earl Bellamy, the present Manager, was invited as he sat at his desk grading papers of his veterans class in the Agricultural Building.

The organization meeting was held on a Thursday night in September, 1954, the best I can recall. It was held in the Agricultural Building, Shallote High School. With about 30 citizens attending, Harry Mintz, Jr., was selected to be moderator for the election of officers. He was then elected President. Earl Bellamy was elected Secretary and Treasurer and Cecil Robbins, I believe, was elected a Director

We went to work getting subscribers at \$50.00 per telephone and were very successful. Within six months of organization, construction of the telephone system was started. We were told that six months was the earliest time of construction in the history of the R. E. A.

Now, the question might arise - "Why did you do it?" "What was in it for you?" My answer is this. When I took office there was no communication system at all west of Winnabow. Leland and Southport had phones. The County had no money. The County Commissioners could not or would not supply funds for police radios. My Deputies and I went from house to house asking for public donations. The funds were given and police radios were installed in the cars of the Sheriff and the three Deputies. So, with the coming of the telephones a good communication system was established for that period of history.

Dated: July 2, 1978

#### HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND COMPOSITION IN PREREVOLUTIONARY BRUNSWICK COUNTY

Alan D. Watson

The family or household constituted the locus of society in early North Carolina. It represented an independent economic unit whose members lived in close proximity under the control of one person - master, mistress, or overseer. Although the definition differs from that of the modern family, it has been assumed for purposes of historical perspective and comparison. (1)

This study derives principally from an analysis of the Brunswick County tax lists of 1769 and 1772 (2). Forming the basis for the imposition of the poll tax, the annual county tax lists enumerated the heads of households and often specified the number of white and black taxables in each family. According to law, taxables comprised all white males sixteen years of age and older and all non-whites, males and females, twelve years of age and older. (3) Sometimes listed by name but not counted as taxables were constables and patrollers, who received exemptions from tax levies as recompense for their duties, and others granted exemptions because of age, infirmity and poverty.

At the outset it must be observed that the Lower Cape Fear counties of Hanover and Brunswick, which were created from New Hanover in 1764, differed markedly from the remainder of the colony in terms of household demography. Moreover, the extant tax lists for New Hanover and Brunswick counties reveal discrepancies within the Lower Cape Fear region. Brunswick contained fewer, but larger and relatively wealthier families. With an abnormally large slave population and a substantial number of sizable plantations, Brunswick in relative terms was correctly characterized by Governor William Tryon in 1767 as a county whose inhabitants were "mostly Gentlemen." (4)

An examination of the tax lists of 1769 and 1772 shows that slightly less than two hundred families resided in Brunswick, giving the county the distinction of having fewer families than most in the province at that time. (5) Although only 15% of the households contained more than ten taxables, that percentage was exceedingly high compared to most counties. Only New Hanover approximated in relative terms the number of large households found in Brunswick County. However, at the same time, it must be noted that the tax lists for New Hanover and Brunswick counties reveal a trend toward decreasing family size in the Lower Cape Fear

during the two decades preceding the Revolution whereas in the remainder of the size of households was increasing.

The white taxables of Brunswick constituted only 17% of the total taxable population of the county, doubtless the lowest percentage of any North Carolina county. Less than a fourth of the households exhibited more than one white male of taxable age. Richard Quince and Governor Tryon listed seven and six white taxables respectively in 1769; four families contained as many as five white taxables in 1772. Since white taxables represented males at least sixteen years of age, families registering several such persons probably contained not only older sons of the heads of the households but also relatives, hired laborers, or indentured servants. (6) The Cape Fear Mercury occasionally carried advertisements of the importation of servants or notices of runaway servants. (7) Nevertheless, slavery provided the overwhelmingly dominant form of labor in Brunswick County.

Although slaves appeared in slightly less than half of the families in Brunswick, they greatly influenced household size inasmuch as they constituted five-sixths of the taxable population. More significantly, a relatively large percentage of Brunswick households contained substantial numbers of bondsmen. In 1769 over one-third of the slaveowning families contained ten or more slaves; in 1772 28% of the families listed at least ten slaves. And no county could match the slaveholdings of such wealthy individuals as John Grange, Maurice Moore, William Dry, who claimed 128 slaves in 1769, and Richard Quince, who registered 155 slaves in 1772.

Constituting an anomalous segment of the population in North Carolina were the free nonwhites, generally called free blacks or mulattoes. Although nominally free, they suffered various restraints upon their citizenship, including their occupation of the same taxable status as that of slaves. Free nonwhites totaled slightly more than one percent of the state's population in 1790; in the colonial era they rarely represented more than three percent of the taxables in any county.

Brunswick evidenced surprisingly few free nonwhites. In 1769 only the family of Stephen Cumbo fell into that category. No designated free blacks appeared in 1772, though Stephen Cumbo and David Cumbo were listed. (8) Since there was such a large slave population in the county, opportunities for the liberation of slaves and miscegenation, factors that would have contributed to the increase of a free nonwhite population, were relatively great. (9) However, emancipation proved unfeasible since bondsmen were such valuable property, and while interracial liaisons were not uncommon, they involved principally white males and black females. The men apparently made little effort to free the children resulting from those relationships. (10)

The appearance of female heads of households represents another intriguing feature of the tax lists. In the overwhelmingly agrarian colony of North Carolina such households were few, never amounting to as many as 10% in any county. Towns, of course, afforded greater opportunities for female employment, but in North Carolina only about two percent of the population resided in urban areas. And certainly the town of Brunswick, termed a "stragling village" just before the Revolution (11), failed to provide the advantages of Wilmington, New Bern, or Edenton, much less those large cities such as Charleston, South Carolina.

Hence, in 1769 only five households, or three percent of the families in Brunswick County, were headed by women. By 1772 the number had increased to thirteen, or seven percent of the households. Seventeen of the eighteen families contained slaves whose labor was generally necessary to support the households. Martha Dalrymple listed 18 bondsmen in 1769; Elizabeth Egan, wife of deceased ferrykeeper Darby Egan, listed 10 in 1772. On the whole, however, slaveholdings in families headed by women tended to be smaller than those headed by men. The Brunswick tax lists also show that widowed females failed to remarry quickly. Of the five women in the 1769 register, three reappeared in 1772. And one of those, Elizabeth Davis, had directed a household as early as 1763 according to a New Hanover County tax list of that year.

A comparison of the tax lists of 1769 and 1772 also suggests a very mobile population in the Lower Cape Fear. Of the 197 heads of households listed in the former year, only 101, or 51%, were present three years later. Although nonslaveowners outnumbered slaveowners by 57 to 54, the latter represented 62% of those owning bondsmen in 1769. Not only was the populace mobile, but, as might be expected, slaveowners were less likely to move since they probably possessed more real property and a greater stake in society than the nonslaveowners.

Of course, the disappearance of the heads of households between 1769 and 1772 might have been attributable in part to death and to outmigration. The number of families remained approximately the same over the three-year period but the number of white and black taxables declined. At the same time the number of female heads of households more than doubled, indicative perhaps of a severe illness that ravaged the county in the intervening years. Literary support for this thesis derives from Henry Johnston, who wrote from the Cape Fear in October 1770, "A Terrible Fever Has made Sad Havock in this part of the Country. Scarce a Family but wears mourning for one or more of Its Branches." And almost a year later Governor Josiah Martin from New Bern noted a "universal sickness" in the colony.(12)

In summary, household size and composition in Brunswick County differed sharply from that in most North Carolina counties. Although the size of the families appeared to decline on the eve of the Revolution, the average household in Brunswick proved exceptionally large by North Carolina standards, a feature occasioned by the overwhelmingly large majority of slaves among the population of the county. In this respect Brunswick and the Lower Cape Fear in general more closely resembled tidewater Virginia, lowcountry South Carolina, and even the British West Indies than the rest of North Carolina. Brunswick, indeed, was a black man's country, and that circumstance greatly influenced the lives of all Brunswick County inhabitants.

#### Notes

1. Among the recent but numerous demographic investigations of the American colonies, the most comprehensive study of the colonial family is that by Robert V. Wells, The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776 (Princeton, 1975). See also Wells, "Household Size and Composition in the British Colonies in America, 1675-1775." Journal of Interdisciplinary History, IV (1974), 543-570. In neither work does Wells give more than passing mention of North Carolina.
2. Brunswick County, Tax List, 1769, Papers, Secretary of State, and Brunswick County, Tax List, 1772, Legislative Papers, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, N. C.
3. Determining total population before the Revolution is hazardous, but for a reliable means of estimating population in North Carolina from tax lists, see H. Roy Merrens, Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century. A Study in Historical Geography (Chapel Hill, 1964), 194-201.
4. William L. Saunders (ed.), The Colonial Records of North Carolina, 10 vols. (Raleigh, 1886-1890) VII, 540.
5. When calculating the number of families, estates of deceased individuals were omitted, resulting in 197 households in 1769 and 195 in 1772. The latter figure includes the late listing of Maurice Moore.
6. For allusions to Tryon's servants see William S. Powell (ed.) "Tryon's Book on North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, XXXIV (1917), 412.
7. See the Cape Fear Mercury (Wilmington), Sept. 22, Dec. 29, 1773.
8. The task of determining the presence of free nonwhites is difficult because tax lists failed to record them separately in most cases. Occasionally they were listed under the heading of slaves; sometimes they were placed in the category of whites. Oftentimes they were simply ~~saat~~ into the listings without designation as exemplified by Stephen Cumbo and David Cumbo in 1772.
9. Of course, in this instance miscegenation would have presupposed liaisons between white females and black males since children bore the status of their mothers. Apparently few such cases occurred, though Robert Howe's daughter reputedly had two children by a slave by the time she was eighteen years old.

Francisco de Miranda, The New Democracy in America: Travels of Francisco de Miranda in the United States, 1783-1784, trans. by Judson P. Wood, ed. by John S. Ezzell (Norman, Oklahoma, 1963), 14.

10. See Janet Schaw, Journal of a Lday of Quality, ed. by Evangeline Walker Andrews with Charles McLean Andrews (New Haven, 1923), 154; Mark A. De Wolfe Howe (ed.), "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1773" Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, XLIV (1916), 463.

11. Quoted from Merrens, Colonial North Carolina, 151.

12. Henry Johnston to Samuel Johnaton, Oct. 2, 1770, Hayes Collection, Folder 70, microfilm, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N. C.; Saunders (ed.), Colonial Records, IX, 35.

LIVING AT FORT JOHNSTON, SMITHVILLE TOWNSHIP, BRUNSWICK IN JUNE 1880

W. P. Graves	W M	39	Married	Command Officer USA	Born Wash. D.C.
H. S. Graves	W F	34	"	Wife	Va.
Emily Graves	W F	4	"	Child	Md.
H. Z. Graves	W M	2	"	"	D.C.
A. A. Graves	W F	11.12	"	"	N.C.
Lotus Miles	W M	27	Single	Com. Off. USA	Ill.
A. D. Schinck	W M	36	Mar.	" " "	Ohio
M. B. Schinck	W F	31	"	Wife	Md.
M. T. Schinck	W F	9	"	Child	Md.
Wm. T. Schinck	W M	7	"	"	Iowa
S. T. Schinck	W F	1	"	"	N.C.
John Davis	W M	31	Single	Soldier USA	Md.
John De Wagner	W M	55	"	" "	France
John Muller	W M	49	"	" "	Germany
James Harris	W M	37	Married	" "	England
James J. Oskren	W M	33	Single	" "	Ohio
Wm. F. Marshall	W M	24	"	" "	Mass.
Adalbert Hirto	W M	31	"	" "	Germany
John O'Halloran	W M	34	"	" "	N.Y.
James Shillinglora	W M	32	"	" "	Scotland
James Boyd	W M	22	"	" "	Pa.
Theodore Bartell	W M	50	"	" "	Germany
John F. Corbett	W M	31	"	" "	Vermont
Jeremiah Crowley	W M	39	"	" "	Mass.
Garrett Dalton	W M	28	"	" "	Ireland
John Downey	W M	28	"	" "	Mass.
John B. Hackepill	W M	27	Married	" "	Pa.
Henry Hammond	W M	24	Single	" "	Germany
Robert H. Jackson	W M	29	"	" "	Ala.
John Long	W M	28	"	" "	Germany
John McCue	W M	23	"	" "	Mass.
Fred H. Merrill	W M	27	"	" "	Maine
Justus Mollenhauor	W M	33	"	" "	Germany
William Moore	W M	38	"	" "	Ireland
James Roland	W M	31	"	" "	Ireland
Job M. Shaw	W M	42	"	" "	N.Y.
John K. Shanley	W M	30	Married	" "	N.Y.
Meloin K. Shields	W M	30	Single	" "	Md.
George Wooster	W M	30	"	" "	Conn.
John R. Young	W M	32	"	" "	Pa.
John V. Soyton	W M	36	"	" "	Scotland
John O'Connor	W M	45	Married	" "	N. Bruns.
Annie O'Connor	W F	35	Wife	" "	Germany
Johnny O'Connor	w m	5	Child	" "	Md.
Charles O'Connor	W M	4	"	" "	Md.

Anny O'Connor	W F 2	Child	N.C.
William O'Connor	W M 1	"	N.C.
Edward Whiting	W M 32	Married Com. Sergt. USA	Mass.
E. Whiting	W F 31	Wife	N.Y.
Eddy Whiting	W M 8	Child	Tx.
Charles Whiting	W M 3	"	Tx.
Frank M. White	W M 20	Single Brother-Jeweller	Mass.
Mary E. White	W F. 18	" Sister "	Mass.
Patrick Spillman	W M 46	Married Soldier USA	Ireland
Margaret M. Spillman	W F 28	Wife	Ireland
George Benson	W M 33	Married " E	Md.
J. Benson	W F 35	Wife	Md.
Fanny Benson	W F 15	Single Child	Md.
R. E. Eskildson	W M 35	Married Hospital Stew.	N.Y.
Mary B. Eskildson	W F 30	Wife " Matron	N.C.
J. B. Eskildron	W M 6	Child	S.C.
Henry Eskildron	W M 4	"	N.C.
John Eskildron	W M 1½	"	N.C.
McDermot, Hugh	W M 45	Married Sargt at Ft. Caswell	N.C.
McDermot, Lizzie	W F 40	Wife Keep House	N.C.
McDermot, Julia	W F 18	Single " "	N.C.

"From Microfilm" by Doris L. Thompson

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER ON NOV. Eighth  
LAWRENCE LEE

I was born and raised in Wilmington and was graduated from New Hanover High School there. I attended and in due time received from the University of North Carolina a business administration degree. Later I became a C. P. A. After four years service in the Army in World War II, I went into real estate development and then decided to go back to school and become a historian, as history had always been a subject of great interest to me, and this step was something I had contemplated for some years but could not get the courage to take it. I received the Ph. D. in History degree from the University of North Carolina and became a member of the faculty at The Citadel in 1956. I remained there in the Department of History until last year when I retired as Professor Emeritus.

I am now devoting my time to writing, and my publications include THE LOWER CAPE FEAR IN COLONIAL DAYS, published by the University of North Carolina Press; INDIAN WARS IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1663-1763, published by the Carolina Tricentenary Commission; and NEW HANOVER COUNTRY, published by the North Carolina Department of Archives and History. I have also published a number of articles for scholarly journals and newspapers and for ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA. My latest work is the HISTORY OF BRUNSWICK COUNTY which has been completed and is awaiting publication. I am presently engaged in several writing projects.

MEMORANDUM ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE NEXT MEETING - Wednesday, November 8 at the Presbyterian Church, Shallotte at 8:00 PM. 13

The speaker; Mr. Lawrence Lee

ALSO AT THE NEXT MEETING; ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR NEXT YEAR

SEND ARTICLES TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSLETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Rev. Reginald T. Bliss

Rt. 1, Box 310

Ash, N. C. 28420