



NEWSLETTER

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

Vol. XXVII No. 3

August 1986

JOHN GREEN'S SWAMP Frank E. Galloway, Editor

In 1795, three tracts of land totaling over 170,000 acres of the 200,000 acre Green Swamp were deeded to three men for a scant total of \$7,100. These deeds, known as patents, were as follows:

Benjamin Rowell	Patent No. 262	30,000 acres
William Collins	Patent No. 263	40,120 acres
Stephen Williams	Patent No. 264	100,000 acres

Though practically impenetrable much of the year, the Green Swamp was well known to travelers. It had been called "John Green's Field" at first, after an early settler, then "John Green's Swamp," "Green's Swamp," and finally "Green Swamp." Lake Waccamaw on the northern border was an especial favorite of early travelers. In 1734, the botanist John Bartram visited the Lake, "as I had heard so much about it." Pushing inland from a Cape Fear River plantation, he swatted "large musquetoos" as he crossed pine barrens and swamp to get to the lake, which he found "the pleasantest place that ever I saw in my life." When his son visited in 1773, he, too, was impressed, finding "the situation delightful."

It was a point of view that the Indian inhabitants would have shared, for archaeological evidence shows that the land was continually inhabited for several thousand years. And why not? It was thick with deer and bear and wild turkey. John Bartram remarked on the tameness of the deer, which looked on him as if they had never seen another human being before.

The Green Swamp remained virtually unchanged until 1907 when the Waccamaw Lumber Co. lay seige. The company railed in great steam skidders and it built a giant sawmill in Bolton. It had 18 miles of rail between Bolton and Makatoka and shorter spurs into the swamp off the main line. They might have been called it the floating railroad. Workers cut 8 or 10 inch wide gum logs for crossties, and lay them close together over the wet ground. Waist high in water and moccasins, gangs of loggers used two-man saws to fell the giant cypress, juniper, and gum. They skidded out the longleaf pines. Flatcars hauled the wood to Bolton, and hauled men to Makatoka at night where the logging camps were. For 34 years they cut virgin timber and when the Waccamaw Lumber Co. sold 138,000 acres to Riegel Paper Corp. in the 1930's, John Green's Swamp had changed forever.