



NEWSLETTER

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

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Vol. XXVII No. 2
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May 1986
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COURTHOUSE AT LOCKWOOD'S FOLLY
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The Legislature of 1778 passed an Act for erecting a courthouse, prison, and stocks in Brunswick County at or near Lockwood's Folly Bridge. William Goss, Edward Wingate, and Samuel Leonard were appointed commissioners for the purpose of contracting with workmen for building these structures. The Act also dictated that the court would meet at John Bell's Plantation until the courthouse could be built.

The 1778 Act authorized the county to levy a tax not to exceed the sum of four shillings on every hundred pounds of taxable property, and a poll tax of four shillings on every taxable person in said county for the purpose of erecting, finishing, and repairing such courthouse, prison, and stocks. However, this tax proved inadequate.

The 1784 court continued to meet at the John Bell Plantation which was occupied at this time by his son Robert who found these meetings very inconvenient and disagreeable.

The General Assembly of 1784 authorized the court to adjourn to any convenient house not more than two miles distant from the Lockwood's Folly Bridge. It also appointed William Gause, Samuel

Leonard, Lewis Dupree, Jacob Leonard, and Henry Walters as commissioners for agreeing with and employing proper workmen to build a good and substantial courthouse, prison, and stocks.

Brunswick County Register of Deeds, Book D, Page 306 reveals that in April of 1787, John Bell sold a three acre tract of land out of his plantation to the county "on which the courthouse and prison now stand." This three acre tract was on the west side of Lockwood's Folly River and began "at a pine running S45E 6 chains; S45W 5 chains; N45W 6 chains; N45E 5 chains to the first station." This would roughly be a 330 x 400 foot tract.

The location of this three acre tract can be generalized from a map in Brunswick County Register of Deeds, Book D, Page 323. This map shows that the courthouse was north of the mouth of Doe Creek and between the river and a small branch going into Doe Creek. By closely examining the map, this branch would have to be Ricegrounds Branch as it is the only drain leading into Doe Creek after the junction of Mill Branch. The Willetts Mill shown on the map was Hope Willetts Mill which is located about 200 yards west of the current Stone Chimney Road. The old bridge site was on the first major bend in the river above the mouth of Doe Creek.

This would place the courthouse site on private land currently owned by Allison Holden. The courthouse most probably sat just Southwest of the small cabin now sitting at the bend where the canal dug from Ricegrounds Branch leads into the River.

This bluff is covered with sizeable mixed hardwoods and gently slopes SE to a flat swamp adjoining the River and Doe Creek. Today the site does not offer any above ground evidence of remnants of any structures.

The General Assembly of 1808 passed an Act to remove the Courthouse from Lockwood's Folly to Smithville "as soon as a courthouse, goal and stocks at least equal to those now standing at Lockwood's Folly" could be built.

No record can be found of the county selling the Lockwood's Folly courthouse site yet it definitely did so. Brunswick County Register of Deeds, Book D, Page 222, dated February 24, 1826 reveals a land transaction between Freeman Reggles and Cornelius Galloway ...certain lot of land situated on Lockwood's Folly River going by the name and well known as public land formerly belonging to the public and the same on which sat the courthouse and jail containing three acres to well known to require a further description. The said Ruggles sells and conveys the said three acres of land with the exception of the buildings thereon which has previously been disposed of to the said Galloway....

In closing, the editor would like to stress the fact that this site is privately owned and is not open to the public. Also it is not marked with a historical marker, yet should be. We as a historical society should make every effort that we can to get this site documented by a professional and strive to have a marker placed on Highway 211 designating this site as of historical interest.

