



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Lockwood Folly River By Frank E. Galloway, Editor

Lockwood Folly River is located entirely in Brunswick County and drains the central part of the county from Shallotte River to Town Creek up to and including a part of the Greenswamp. For years, anyone living in this area had an address of simply "Lockwood Folly."

In 1785, the first effort was made to improve navigation on the river. The court appointed a jury to devise a plan to deepen the existing inlet or to open a new one. The jury chose to lay off a new one. It is not known whether this was done or not. In 1797 a request was granted to clear the river of snags and again several times in the early 1820's. In 1851, a draw was built into the "Lower Bridge" near the old courthouse site (See May 86 Newsletter) but was removed in 1855 because it proved to be unsatisfactory.

Over the years, the river channel has been altered drastically as it approaches the inlet to the ocean. When the inland waterway was dredged during the 1930's and 1940's, small drains and sloughs flowing into the river near the mouth were rerouted, changed, done away with and some even added. Those most greatly affected were Davis Canal, Little Davis Creek, Thompkins Branch, Montgomery Slough, and Mercer's Millpond. The main river channel from Varnumtown to the ocean was even changed!

The old river flowed from Varnumtown up Mill Creek to the mouth of Mercer's Millpond, against the Eastern Bend adjacent to Cox's Landing and Mullet Creek, passed Howell's Point between Sheep Island and Horse Island and entered the ocean just west of and behind Sheep Island. The Core of Engineers, while working on the waterway, dredged a channel from Varnumtown downstream on the west side adjacent to Smokehouse, Myrtle Point, Genoe's Point, and between the Galloway Flats and Sheep Island. This effectively caused the river's channel to flow in front of Sheep Island to the inlet. A large portion of this dredge spoil was placed at Wildcat and on Sheep Island.

Even before the inland waterway was dredged, the main channel had been altered, but north and upstream of Varnumtown but not as greatly. Sometime around the turn of the century, two separate cuts, both done by spade and shovel, shortened the river's channel. Fullwood Cut allowed the water to flow straight to Varnumtown rather than around the Wildcat Loop. The same thing occurred just upstream by the dredging of Mercer's Cut. The river was forced to flow straight rather than around by the mouth of Maple and Stanberry Branch.

These earlier dredging operations facilitated easier shipping up and down the river as far up as the current Hwy. 211 bridge. Small boats called "sharpies" or "schooners" plied the river carrying out turpentine, lumber, shingles, and farm products and bringing in hardware, cloth, etc. Two of these schooners that can be documented to have plied Lockwood Folly River were the ADMIRAL and LATHAM.

These small "sharpies" stopped at several landings on both sides of the river. The first of these was on the west side of the river at the Varnumtown landing where W. H. Varnum ran a thriving merchantile business. The next landing, going upstream, was Log Landing above the mouth of Bell Branch. The next two landings were referred to as the Upper and Lower Sandhill Landings, both below the mouth of Pamlico Swamp and separated by one of the river's long winding loops. Mercer landing or Still landing was just upstream from these two landings but was on the west side. John Mercer ran a turpentine distillery here, hence its name.

Going further upstream, there was Gibbneck Landing near the mouth of Moccasin and Lude Branch and Doe Creek Landing just above the mouth of Doe Creek. A tram railroad that hauled shingles and lumber from the prospect and Makatoka area ended at Doe Creek Landing. The next landing was the Supply Landing located just south of the current Hwy. 211 bridge and probably the busiest of all the landings. This is reflected in a petition to the Board of County Commissioners dated May 19, 1902...

... We, the undersigned, your petitioners, being citizens of Brunswick County, respectfully pray your honorable body to provide and keep up a sufficient draw in the bridge across the Lockwoodsfolly River at supply, that will allow the Necessary and convenient passage of vessels and boats. We beg to show to your honorable body that a draw is necessary for a number of reasons among which are the following to wit:

1. The natural place for a landing is above the bridge, where the bank is high and is never overflowed, while the landing below the bridge is low, and is always overflowed in an ordinary freshet, making it unsafe as a freight landing.
2. There are five stores above the bridge, and also two sawmills and 1 gin (cotten) and a great number of people who patronize these places of businesses would be materially benefitted by a draw in the bridge.
3. Persons living above the bridge, and all who make shipments from Supply by water, are compelled to unload their freights above the bridge, and then cart it down to the present landing thus entailing much expense and loss of time, which would be unnecessary with a draw in the bridge.

4. Large quantities of wood for fuel, that is now practically of no value to the owners, could be shipped to market and a reasonable profit realized from its sale, if there was a draw in the bridge.

For these, and other good reasons, your petitioners respectfully ask that a draw be place in the said bridge.

Three of the five stores named in this petition are the George Kirby and Richmond Galloway store on the North side of 211 and the Peter Ruark store on the south side of 211. All three were on the west side of the river.

Apparently the petitioners request was ignored. A photo of the bridge taken in 1914 does not indicate the addition of a draw. However by this time, water travel was being replaced by "horseless carriages."

The area of Lockwood Folly River near the current Hwy. 211 bridge has historically always been of importance. The old courthouse site was located south of 211 and north of the mouth of Doe Creek. The first bridge over the river was existing prior to 1784, at which time it was referred to as the "old bridge." This bridge was located adjacent to the courthouse site.

An article appearing in the Wilmington Gazette, May 29, 1804 indicates the historical importance of this area.

A bargain for sale, or to be leased for a term of years, the plantation, tavern, ferry, on Lockwood Folly adjoining the Courthouse. The house contains seven bedrooms and one dining room above; a hall and parlor below with four fireplaces Stables and every other necessary outbuilding. The garden and orchard are capacious, and contain a variety of fruit trees.

The plantation contains 920 acres; 400 are under fence; 80 acres are tide swamp, and a part in order for planting. Boats from four to five feet of draught may load at the landing; vessels from 5 to 7 feet draught of water may go over the bar, which is but twelve miles to Cape Fear Bar; a store may be established here to great advantage; and the ferry is becoming, from the great increase of settlers, every day more productive.

The present owner has lived on the premises nearly twelve years, and has ever enjoyed a good state of health; but his present indisposition for a few months past renders him incapable of attending to business, which is the only reason for offering the above valuable property for sale. Apply on the premises to Daniel Bellune.

The above mentioned Bellune Ferry is not to be confused with the Thomas Bell Ferry which operated on the lower part of Lockwood Folly River as early as 1733 (See Feb 86 Newsletter).

The Thomas Bell Ferry appears to have been replaced by the bridge at the old courthouse site probably due to the increased traffic going to the courthouse.

In turn, this bridge grew to be used less and less as things shifted slightly upstream to the current Hwy. 211 bridge and after the courthouse was moved to Smithville in 1808. Bellune operated his ferry at or near the 211 crossing at the same time the bridge was still being used at the courthouse. The Bellune Ferry was replaced with a bridge but the date of this is not known. These two bridges located only a short distance apart were referred to as the Upper and Lower Bridges. The Courthouse bridge was the lower bridge and the Supply Bridge was the Upper bridge. Both were still standing in 1851. The Lower or Courthouse Bridge was not standing in 1902.

Milldams on the Lockwood Folly River system not included in the November 86 Newsletter are Bell Branch or Mill Branch Milldam located just upstream from its mouth on the river. This dam was probably built by John Bell, SR. This is the same branch that runs NW to Blanton's fishpond and Royal Oak Service Station. This dam would be directly behind the old Richmond Galloway Store.

The editor has been able to locate an additional dam in the Sunset Harbor area on Mill Branch which flows into Mercer's Millpond. This dam would have been only a short distance from the John Mercer Milldam on Mercer's Millpond. Another milldam may be located in the Lennon's Crossroads area on Mill Branch but has not yet been identified.

During the War of Northern Aggression, Union Warships blockaded Lockwood Folly Inlet. Three blockade runners sank off Lockwood Folly Inlet on Jan. 11, 1864.

RANGER. 500 tons. 1 mile W of inlet.
15 feet of water. Cargo--rifles and tools.

BENDIGO. 500 tons. 1 mile SW of inlet.
15 feet of water. Cargo--rifles and tools.
Awash at low tide.

IRON AGE. 424 tons. LWF inlet.
10 feet. Ran aground while attempting to tow the Bendigo.
torched and destroyed.

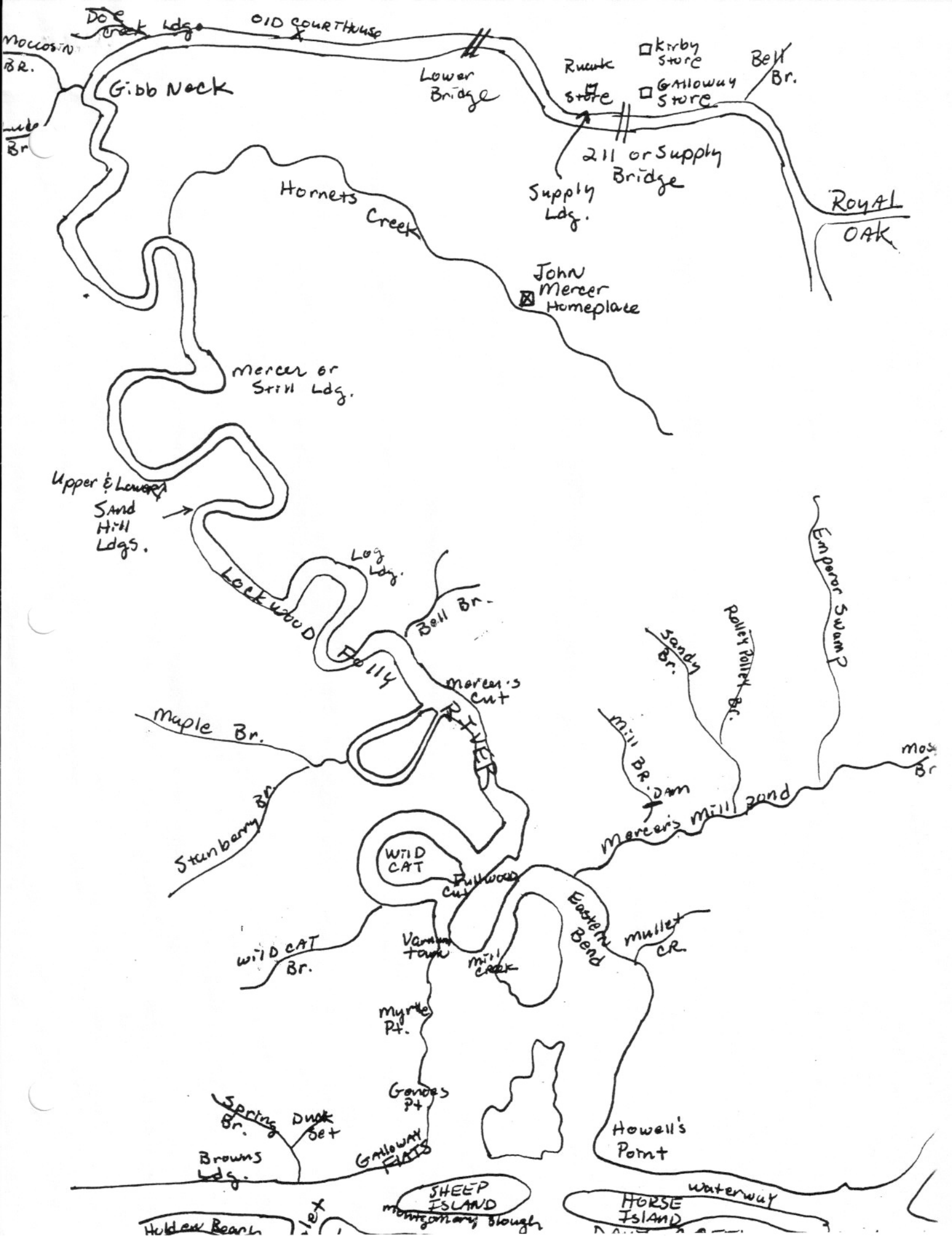
On Feb. 2, 1864 the Commander of the U. S.S. Governor Buckingham, a Union blockader, had received information that "muskets and carpenter's tools have been taken from the RANGER, and that the Parrott rifle from the IRON AGE has been recovered. They do this principally at night and in thick weather. One or two of these men are very intelligent, and can give some information regarding the disposition of the coast guard, etc. While recently, on Station No. 4, observed on two or three occasions men at work about the wrecks and drove them away; while one day, having approached quite near the RANGER was warmly attacked by a party of riflemen concealed behind the sandhills."

Likewise , the U.S.S. VICKSBURG stationed off Lockwood Folly Inlet on April 8, 1864 had acquired information ... "He states that in the vicinity of Lockwood Folly Inlet, where he has been making salt, there were some 200 men stationed there as picket guard, but at the present having left about March 25 for Fairfax Courthouse, VA. He says that the salt made at this inlet amounted to about 7 barrels per day, worth \$10.50 Confederate money. He also states that an electric telegraph has been established between Lockwood Folly Hill and Smithville, the terminus at the former place being guarded by a number of men and one piece of artillery."

From the Gilmer maps of 1864 and newspaper accounts, we can gather that at least 5 saltworks operated in the Lockwood Folly vicinity: Hall, Thornton, Howard, Mercer, and one unnamed party. There were also additional salt works between Lockwood Folly and Dutchman's Creek.

The editor at his time requests information dealing with any of the branches, swamps, cemeteries, milldams, etc. on the river from its mouth to the headwaters. The map that follows should be of help.

FRANK E. GALLOWAY, EDITOR



CURRENT CONCERNS

The next meeting of the Brunswick County Historical Society will be Monday, August 10, at 8 o'clock in the Visitor Center at Brunswick Town. Mr. James Bartley will speak on North Carolina's historic sites program, Old Brunswick in particular.

Autumn Days at Brunswick Town will begin September 26 with demonstrations of candle dipping, soap making, open hearth cooking, woodworking and basketry.

The Fayetteville Museum of the Cape Fear is planning a traveling exhibition to serve a twenty-county area with programs for towns and schools.

Junior Historians gathered at Peace College in Raleigh for Awards Day May 21-22.

Secretary of State Thad Eure recently completed his fiftieth year of continuous service in that office, the longest tenure of any secretary of state in American history. He received official recognition conveyed by the American Association of Secretaries of State at the annual conference held at Raleigh in May. The week of that conference was the busiest week of reference usage in the history of the North Carolina State Archives.

The UNC special collections at Chapel Hill will be closed August 10-14 in order to move and to reopen August 17 in the renovated and newly designed quarters of the old Wilson Building.

"Roads to Liberty" is a traveling history exhibit scheduled to make stops in eighty-two cities in nineteen states by the end of September.

At Methodist College, March 27-28, the Southern Writers' Symposium was held in honor of Paul Green. The writer's family and many noted authors were present. The college's next such symposium will be in April of 1988.

Appropriation of \$4.2 million for the New Hanover County Museum of the Lower Cape Fear now makes possible plans for the expansion of this oldest regional historical museum in North Carolina.

As part of our celebration of the Bi-centennial of our Constitution we can purchase and use commemorative postal cards with illustration of the Constitutional Convention.

An excavation project is in progress at the old Charles Towne site near the confluence of Town Creek and the Cape Fear River. We will secure more up-to-date information soon.

Many historical societies are planning events in celebration of the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. Suggestions for this society should be made in writing for the Board of Directors and the Program Committee.

Members who have overlooked payment of membership dues for 1987 will please send them to our treasurer, Mrs. Lottie Ludlum, Box 874, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.