



Brunswick County Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

August 1999

A word from your president.....

Dear members,

The other day I read in our STATE magazine a statement saying "good ole summertime." I believe they are the prettiest words in the English language. I do hope you have enjoyed the "good old summertime" thus far. There is not too much summertime left— so enjoy that also.

Our August 9 meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. at Brunswick Electric Membership Cooperative building on Highway 17 between Supply and Shallotte. Going toward Shallotte it will be on your left just past The Brunswick Hospital. Coming from the Shallotte area it will be on your right, just past Mt. Pisgah road. And adjacent to Doe Creek Inn. Mike Edwards will be our speaker. He has written a book on the Fort Fisher hermit which will be for sale as well as tee shirts. The November meeting will be a panel discussion by World War II veterans. They will share their memories and memorabilia. Everyone can be a participant. Search your photograph books for pictures of friends and family in uniform. Our special guest will be Captain. Wilbur J. Jones., USNR (RET.). Begin to make plans now as we do our part to celebrate the *Wartime Wilmington Commemoration, 1999.*

The first NEWSLETTER was published September, 1961 for the first meeting of the Society. We will celebrate our birthday with a cake at the August meeting. Thanks to Bertha Groham for helping with this event.

There are only 16 rolls of microfilm left to be purchased for our collection at the Brunswick Community College. This is a nice way to honor a friend or family member. Send your check for \$34.00 to the Treasurer if you are interested.

Progress is being made on the publication of *The Brunswick County Chronology*. Bill Reeves has been so kind in helping us with this project and we cannot thank him enough. If you would like to correspond with him contact the editor for his address.

I have added a new feature to my column. "Just so we will know our county" will make us aware of the many events going on in our area. At times, different towns will be highlighted. Mark your calendar and be with us at our August meeting for a most interesting program as well as fun, food and fellowship

Your president,
Lottie Ludlum

OFFICERS

President:

Lottie Ludlum

Vice President:
Frank Galloway

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Helen Taylor

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Gwen Causey

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The Old Man and the sea



Robert Harrell, the Fort Fisher Hermit, lived from 1955 until his death in 1972. He gained a reputation as a grassroots philosopher, and he attracted a stream of visitors. He told his son "You're going out to work for millionaires," he said. "They'll get richer and you'll get poorer. And when... they have ruined your health and can't use you anymore, they'll get rid of you." Were these the words of someone that had been so easily disposed of at one time in his life?

Long after the hermit died, Stanley South wrote a narrative poem titled *The Fort Fisher Hermit*. It offers a glimmer into the hermit's former self:

"Why did I become a friendly hermit?"

A lot of people ask me that. Well I'm from Shelby, you know.

I had some jobs there, and the things a man acquires in a lifetime of sweating and working, and losing , and going nowhere.


And for what? I became a tyrant in my own home. Then I lost my wife.

And after that it didn't seem to matter anymore."

His life living on the beach could not have been all Pina Coladas and Strawberry Daiquiris. With thunderstorms, hurricanes warning and bugs and such. The bunker he called home was a haven for the lost and indigent and it is said that you could go there to drink and raise a little sand.

Buried in Carolina Beach, the hermit's death remains a mystery. The officials say he died of a heart attack but others suggest that he was murdered. If he was a fun loving person, he may not have objected to being pulled around in a sleeping back, but it could have cost him his life? And that doesn't seem like murdered just bad judgement.

Who was this man that lived in the sand dunes of Fort Fisher. A man that lived as a hermit, eating from trash cans, taking handouts and dispensing salty wisdom? Mike Edwards, the guest speaker for August will help us get to know this man they called the Hermit. The August meeting will be held in the Brunswick Electric Membership Cooperation meeting room. See back page for more details on our upcoming meetings.

*This month's historical highlight***GENERAL ROBERT HOWE**


Robert Howe was born around 1732 into a wealthy Cape Fear River planter family who recently migrated from South Carolina and purchased a one-thousand-acre-plantation opposite Mount Misery. This property stretched from Indian Creek to Gabourel Bluff, and the Howe family inhabited the house on this plantation at least part of the time.

The specifics of Howe's early life are sketchy and largely undocumented. It is apparent from his high degree of literacy and his intimate knowledge of English literature that he was well educated, but there is not enough documentation to show whether this came from plantation schooling, from kinsmen in Charleston, or from an English school.

He had a love for Shakespeare and other major English writers, a fluency with English language, and an air of breeding and confidence that was part of his general demeanor. His penmanship, however was so deplorable that he frequently referred to his writing as "hieroglyphics"

The young Robert Howe married Sarah Grange and the newly-weds took up residence on Grange property near the Cape Fear River. He purchased several plantations and lived on one he had inherited from his father. After 1770 he finally obtained Kendall plantation which was on the Cape Fear River adjoining Orton. This well-known rice plantation, which had originated as a part of Roger Moore's 1726 grant, was Howe's home throughout the remainder of his life. Kendall contained approximately 400 acres, 180 of which was excellent rice-field marshes.

As a planter and business man, Howe was less than successful. His inheritance from his grandmother and from his father was reduced by 1775, after sales and mortgages of land and slaves. While he waited appointment to the command of one of North Carolina's regiments, he was forced to mortgage Kendall plantation. One critic complained that Howe spend too much presenting a good appearance.

As years passed by, his excessive involvement in public affairs as a legislator, judge, and military commander fringed upon any time for business enterprises that would have benefited him financially. Later in life he was to comment that since he had been "born to affluence, I have been bred to no trade or profession."

The enthusiasm and persuasive charm of young Robert Howe was better suited to public life than to the pursuits of a coastal planter. Early in his work in the General Assembly he became recognized for his writing of bills needed to improve the militia and finances for Governor Arthur Dobb's plans for war preparedness. He sponsored legislation in 1764 that created Brunswick County out of Blanden and New Hanover Counties. In the 1765 Assembly he took his seat as the representative of the new county of Brunswick. In 1766 he prepared an address to His Majesty George III expressing appreciation for repeal of the Stamp Act. Among his many efforts to solve problems was the settlement of the boundary line with South Carolina.

After Tryon left North Carolina in 1771, his successor, Josiah Martin, removed Howe from his position. With further considerations, the Royal government of North Carolina collapsed. The governor was no longer in control, and there was a rush toward a revolution. Robert Howe was aligned with the Sons of Liberty. With the outbreak of the Revolution, Howe was appointed Colonel of the Second North Carolina Regiment. He became the commanding general of the Southern Department and the highest-ranking officer from the states south of Virginia.

After Howe's forces were defeated by the British in Savannah in December, 1778, Benjamin Lincoln assumed command of the Southern Department, and Howe rode north to join General Washington's army. As division commander in the New York highlands, he participated in the defense of West Point and helped prey upon British positions around New York City. On two occasions he was called upon to put down mutinies in the Continental Army. He presided over the court martial of Benedict Arnold and Alexander McDougall, and he sat on the jury for the spy trial of British Major John Andre.

After serving during the entire war, Howe returned to his native state and began to rebuild his image as a planter and political leader. He was elected to the General Assembly, but died in 1786 before taking office.

JM Holden

References: Colonial Records; State Records, Rankin, Hugh; North Carolina Continentals, Cummings, William; The Fate of a Nation, Bennett-Lennon; A Quest for Glory



Welcome, to our new member's!

The mission of the Brunswick County Historical Society is simple: we want to learn and share the rich history of our area. We are a non profit organization, membership dues and private donations cover the cost of putting out the newsletter.

The Brunswick County Historical Society officers and Board of Directors would like to thank all members for renewing their membership with the society and encourage all others to do so.

If you are interesting in becoming a member; send \$10.00 for yearly membership or \$100.00 to become a life-time member Mail to: Gwem Causey Treasurer, Brunswick County Historical Society, Post Office Box 874 Shallotte N.C. 28459

Can you believe it? we've had 10 new members since January! There seems to be a lot of renewed interest in the history of our county. In fact, it has been reported that two new organizations are being formed. One will preserve the history or Calabash and the other will concern the historic preservation of Shallotte. Give these people all your support and encouragement in their endeavors.

Helen Strecker
 Susie Carson
 Tom Potter
 Betty Rodgers
 Glen & Ruth Young
 Eloise Gibson
 Mildred Mercer
 Warren Phelps
 Sherry Cromwell
 Nellie Sue Creech
 Doreen Hoitz
 Janie Parker
 Johnsie Holden *
 Judy Holden *
 Tumps Phelps
 Carol Beauvais
 Ruth T. White
 Jim Marlowe
 Edward L. Sellers, Jr.
 Arthur Little
 Mary Mintz
 Anson Ludlum
 Kimberly Morris
 Henry Williams

* Life Member

Billie Kirby
 Mabel Harden
 William Huggins
 Glen Kye
 Gwen Causey
 Ernestine Mercer
 Barbara Wilson
 Andrea Beck
 Trudy Green
 Sonya McCutheron
 Eddie Clemmons
 Helen Taylor
 John Holden *
 Tabetha R. Cooke *
 Edwin Taylor
 Susan U. Eggert
 Betsy Moore
 David Bennett
 Annie S. Bracken
 Roderic Bellamy
 Brenda Russ
 Lottie Ludlum
 Kendall Cumbee

Wreck of the Blockade-Runner KATE-1862

By Sandy Jackson

The blockade-runner *Kate*, a 483-ton, side wheel steamer, was originally the *Carolina*, built in Greenpoint, New York, in 1852. The Vessel's dimensions were 165 feet in length, 29 feet 10 inches in beam, and 10 feet 4 inches in depth. As the *Carolina*, it plied between Charleston, South Carolina, and Palatka, Florida.

In late 1861 or early 1862 John Frasher and Company purchased the vessel to be used as a blockade-runner and changed the name to *Kate*. Under the command of Capt. Thomas J. Lockwood of Smithville and George C. McDougal as chief engineer, the *Kate* attempted to run the Union blockade twenty times from January to November 1862. With a reported speed of nine knots, the *Kate* was successful each time in eluding the blockade.

The *Kate* was responsible for bring the yellow fever epidemic to Wilmington from the port of Nassau in August 1862. The epidemic which began on August 6 and ended November 17, resulted in the loss of 450 and 700 lives. The *Kate* was again threatened on a subsequent trip into Wilmington. On the night of October 8, 1862, three Union boats launched from larger vessels offshore tried to enter the Cape Fear River through New Inlet for the purpose of destroying the *Kate*. Breakers prevented small boats from entering and forced the vessel to turn back.

During the same month that the yellow fever epidemic was finally brought under control in Wilmington, the blockade -runner's career was also coming to an end. On November 18, 1862, in the Cape Fear River near Fiddler's Drain, now called Bonnet's Creek, one-half mile above Smithville (later Southport), the *Kate* ran upon some obstructions and "partially" sank. The cargo was salvaged but the ship was a total loss. The captain of another blockade-runner later wrote of the *Kate*; "her ribs were to be seen for many a day before war ended, bleaching in the sun on one of the mud flats in Cape Fear River." A young man named James Randall wrote that the "wreck of the steamer *Kate*" was a "famous fishing ground" where he used to lash the boat to "one of the sunken paddle wheels" to fish.

In 1994 state underwater archaeologist discovered and documented the remains of the sunken blockade-runner *Kate*. A ceramic plate with a design showing the name "Carolina" helped determine the identity of the sunken vessel.

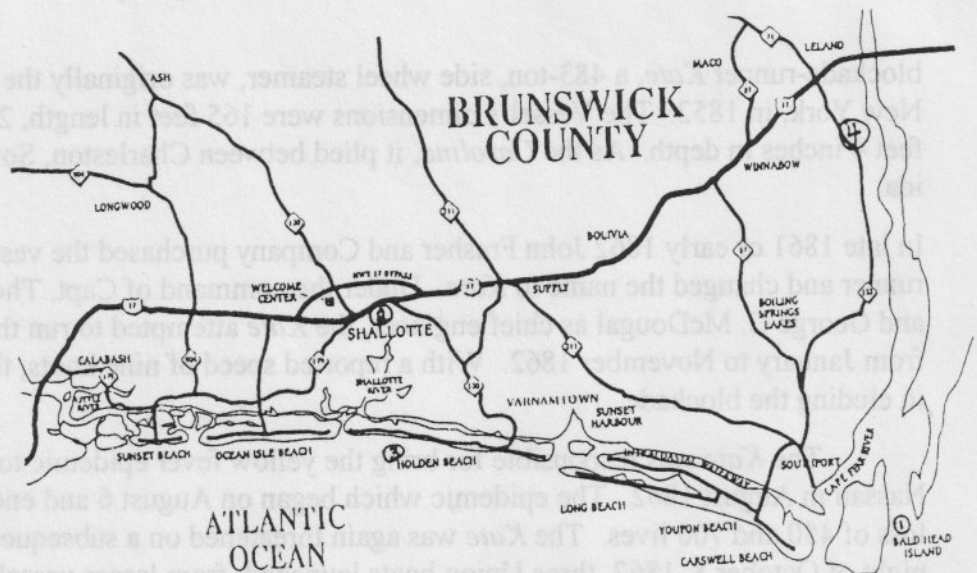


Plate Design from Blockade Runner *Kate*
Drawing by Martin Preoles

"JUST SO WE WILL KNOW OUR COUNTY"

Schedule of Events

- **Sept 6**
LABOR DAY TEXAS BARBECUE,
BALD HEAD ISLAND
- **October 16 & 17**
NC OYSTER FESTIVAL
- **October 29-31**
NC FESTIVAL BY THE SEA
- **November 5-7** THIRD ANNUAL
NC INDIAN HERITAGE POW WOW,
BRUNSWICKTOWN STATE HIS-
TORIC PARK



Internet is useful for research

The internet is a wonderful tool for doing research. While the researcher must carefully analyze the materials

Fort Anderson

A new book by Chris Fonvielle, Jr. is now on the bookstore shelves.

"**Fort Anderson** Battle For Wilmington" is liberally sprinkled with period illustrations and photos, many of them never published before. Dr. Fonvielle competently covers the maneuvers that led up the evacuation of Fort Anderson on the morning of February 19, 1865, and the capture of Confederate Wilmington just the days later. The book published by Savas Publishing is \$12.95.

on the web to determine accuracy and authenticity, the numbers of libraries and archives providing primary source material by electronic means is constantly growing. Following are several web addresses that include information about the facility, and in some cases, primary source materials. [Http://metalab.unc.edu/](http://metalab.unc.edu/Refernce/quickref.html)

[Refernce/quickref.html](http://www.lib.duke.edu)

[Http://www.lib.duke.edu](http://www.lib.duke.edu)

[Http://www.lib.ecu.edu/](http://www.lib.ecu.edu/)

[Http://historymatters.gmu.edu/browsewww.html](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/browsewww.html)

[Http://www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

[Http://www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov)

[Http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc](http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc)



War and Remembrance

The North Carolina Division of Archives and History in Raleigh is honoring our state's veterans with the Military Collection Project, an ongoing enterprise that will better document North Carolina's military experience.

The Archives is honoring the men and women of North Carolina who served in the armed forces by collecting and preserving their original photographs, letters, diaries, reminiscences, military papers, discharge forms, and other small artifacts.

Although donations are preferred, the archives will accept copies of prints or will copy documents and return them to the lender at no cost. Audio and video interviews with veterans also are being collected for preservation. Volunteers who would like to assist with the interviews can obtain question guides from the archives to use when conducting veteran interviews.

According to archivist Sion Harrington, the coordination of the project, "We're not just looking for stories from heroes. Even the most ordinary service was vitally important. If you didn't have all the people behind the scenes, the front lines couldn't fight."

If you have items you would like to donate or share with the North Carolina State Archives, or if you are interesting in conducting interviews, call (919) 733-3952, or write to

Wartime Wilmington Commemoration

The 1999 Wartime Wilmington commemoration continues until Pearl Harbor Day, December 7th. Throughout the year, a variety of exhibits and panel discussions will take place. This month the New Hanover County Public Library will host the Smithsonian Institution's highly popular traveling W.W.II poster exhibit "Produce for Victory" from August 28-October 15. The City of Wilmington is the co-sponsor for this free public exhibition. A grand opening (admission) will be held on the 27th. Contact Dorothy Hodder for more information (910) 772-7858.

The Brunswick County Historical Society will offer a panel discussion of Brunswick county veterans on November 8, at the Brunswick Electric Membership Cooperative Building. (754-8445) as a part of its involvement with the 1999 Wartime Commemoration.

Other events include:

- ♦ **August 12-15** *Super W.W.II Weekend*. VJ-Day Commemoration. 14-15 Camp Lejeune Marine Corps exhibits, equipment, and demonstrations. Battleship (251-5797 or 793-6393).
- ♦ **August 13-14**— *Four new original one-act plays* based on W.W.II Wilmington, presented by Playwrights Producing Company local theater group, Community Arts Center (256-2387)
- ♦ **August 22**— *Salute to Wilmington's Blacks in the War Effort*, and to the *Montford Point Marines*, artifacts, Chestnut Street Presbyterian church (762-0242)

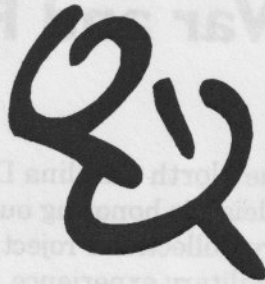


Saluting all men and women who served during W.W.II

Please Note: All future meeting will be held in

But what about the book?

Brunswick County Chronology is progressing . Two sections are being proofread. Would you like to assist with this project? Contact Gwen Causey 754-8445
Many thanks to Bill Reeves for helping



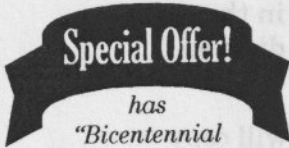
the Brunswick Electric
Membership Cooperative
Meeting building.

August 9, 1999

Mike Edwards, "The Fort Fisher Hermit"

November 8, 1999 Salute to Brunswick

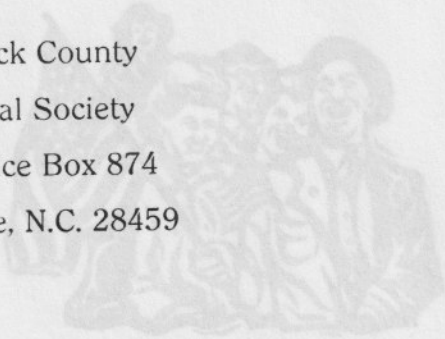
County Veterans panel discussion



has
**"Bicentennial
County North Carolina"** a souvenir
booklet that was used in the
bicentennial program held in November
15, 1964. This 19 pages booklet is
packed with Brunswick county history.
We only have 100 copies and would like
to offer them for \$5.00 each to raise
funds for the newsletter and other
expenses. Please call to reserve.
754-8445

The Society
copies of
Brunswick

Brunswick County
Historical Society
Post Office Box 874
Shallotte, N.C. 28459



- August 22 - Salute to Wilmington's Blacks in the War Effort and to the Monford Point Monuments
- August 13-14 - Four new original one-act plays based on W.W.II Wilmington, presented by Playwrights Producing Company local theater group, Community Arts Center (256-2387)
- August 12-15 - Super W.W.II Weekend VI-Day Commemoration, 14-15 Camp Lejeune Marine Corps exhibits, equipment, and demonstrations. Battleship (251-2797 or 793-6393)
- Other events include: