

Recovery was slow but steady. Smithville again became popular as a summer resort and within the next century the county thrived. And, most recently, tourism has become a major factor in the economic health of the area. The interest in beaches, which began to the north of Brunswick County, was contagious, and in time was directed along the southern edge of our county. The result has been the development of fine seaside communities incorporated since 1950, and most recently one island community, incorporated in 1985.

(Editor's note: this article is loosely based on information found in Dr. Lawrence Lee's History of Brunswick County.)

MULLETS AND SWEET TATERS

By: Leslie Bright

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I can think of no other naturally occurring and widely distributed food commodities, that have contributed to settlers' nourishment and survival along the coastal areas of North Carolina, as mullets and sweet potatoes. Known as Jumping Mullet, Popeye Mullet, and Sucking Mullet, this fish can be found plentiful in most parts of the world as they are at home in fresh, brackish, or salt water. Considered by some as trash fish, they have been commercially harvested for oil and fertilizer. To a few folks with unique taste buds, they are considered a delicacy, but to many more, this fish was something to eat when nothing else was available and could be transformed into an exotic dish when eaten with sweet potatoes. Less fortunate folks in eastern North Carolina often survived during these periods by eating a lot of mullet and sweet potatoes.

Mullets were caught in gill nets, haul seine nets, or snagged with treble fishing hooks. One method which sometimes worked was to wait for a school to swim by, frighten them, and pick them up when they jumped out of the water and landed on the shore, the marsh, or your boat. Plentiful as mullets were in the old days, one could usually venture to the nearest boat landing and buy all one wanted for pennies. Before electricity was provided in coastal areas, mullets were preserved for food by salting them. I, myself, recall helping to salt mullets as a youngster in the late 40s and 50s. This we did by first cleaning the fish and then rubbing them with salt and tightly packing them in a large open-ended wooden barrel. We added brine water, which we made by adding salt to water until a hen egg floated, level with the top of the fish. Salt was then poured over until it reached a thickness of approximately two inches. A muslin cloth was draped over the open barrel to keep insects from falling in. As the salt brine permeated the fish, the salt layer would become rigid to form a seal. A few fish, from time to time, could be removed through a plug hole cut out of the salt cap and put back to restore the seal. Fish removed from the brine were soaked in warm water to dilute and remove salt before cooking, especially with sweet potatoes.

Sweet potatoes were easily grown in small and large garden plots in practically any type of soil. Their abundance also made them available cheaply. In rural neighborhoods, one could usually get a "mess" from a neighbor if one ran out. Called spuds, yams, or sweet taters by coastal folks, preservation of this food was simple, "don't let them freeze." They would become "cold-hurt", and make you sick. Preservation was accomplished by preparing a "potato bank." In a depression on the sunny side of a hill, prepare a straw bed, place the sweet potatoes on the bed, leaving air spaces before placing straw over them, and then cover with soil deeper than the frost line. To get them out, make a small hole, take out a few, and replace the straw and soil.

I suspect that if you don't know what mullet and taters taste like prepared on an old wooden stove, you are not familiar with the outhouse privy.

TURPENTINE PLANTATIONS

(Selected paragraphs from *ANTE-BELLUM NORTH CAROLINA, A SOCIAL HISTORY* by Guion Griffis Johnson and published by The University of North Carolina Press in 1937.)

At the close of the ante-bellum period not many planters were engaged in making turpentine, for by this time most of the trees in Eastern Carolina had been used up by the industry or had died of a disease which attacked great numbers of North Carolina pines in the late forties. ("A North Carolina Farmer," *Carolina Cultivator*, April, 1855, p. 60.) A turpentine plantation usually lasted from eight to ten years, or, with careful working, from twelve to fourteen. ("Turpentine," *Arator*, March, 1856, p. 356.) After that the trees were cut and made into tar, a slightly less profitable industry. A plantation, to be profitable, had to be located near a distillery, for turpentine could not bear the cost of being hauled a long distance. If the distillery was on a river, as it most frequently was, the turpentine could be hauled two or three miles and rafted down forty or fifty miles at a cheaper rate than it would cost to haul to the still over six or seven miles. Frequently, planters had to wait for a winter freshet to be able to get their barrels of turpentine down the shallow creeks to Fayetteville or Wilmington. If a person lived on thin pine lands, turpentine was the most profitable staple he could make even though he had to haul it ten or twelve miles. Planters advantageously located frequently cleared \$500 to \$700 a hand.

In 1855 D. L. Russell of Brunswick County was the largest maker of turpentine in the Cape Fear region except the Green Swamp Company. He owned some 25,000 acres and had a force of 150 hands. He also had a thousand acres in cultivation half of which was in corn, the rest in other food crops, and in cotton, for he attempted to make his plantation self-sustaining. But turpentine was his chief concern and he usually cleared about \$25,000 a year.

The routine on a turpentine plantation was regulated by the task system. The task for a prime hand was from 450 to 500 boxes a week, or 75 to 80 a day. Expert hands could work faster than this and were usually encouraged to do so by being paid for extra boxes. A beginner would do well to cut fifty boxes a day, and the judicious planter did not assign him more work than this, for the most important part of the whole process was in having the boxes well and properly cut. ("Turpentine," *Arator*, March, 1856, p. 354; "Turpentine Making," *Carolina Cultivator*, January, 1856, p. 349.)

Cutting boxes began about the first of November and continued until the first or middle of March. A well-cut box was from eight to fifteen inches long with a smooth lower rim, having a slope inward of two or three inches in order to hold about a quart of "drip." As soon as the boxes were cut, each task was marked off by blazing a line of trees. The task was divided further by rows of stakes fifty yards apart, cutting the task into squares of about half an acre so that the hand could proceed without skipping any trees and the driver or overseer could inspect the work accurately. The hands were then set to work cutting corners to the boxes.

Dipping usually began about the first of April, and the number of dippings in a season varied from four to seven, depending upon the age of the plantation. As the plantation grew older and the chipping of the boxes extended higher up the trees, the number of dippings of "soft" turpentine decreased and the proportion of "hard" or "scrape" increased. A hand ordinarily got over his task in six or eight days, filling five or six barrels a day and dipping from 1,800 to 3,000 boxes a day.

While the dipping was being done, usually by women and inferior hands, expert hands were busy chipping the boxes. For instance, one hand could dip four tasks while three prime hands did the chipping, going over each box four or five times between each dipping. The scrape, or hard

turpentine which collected about the box; usually was not gathered until the second winter, but afterwards it was collected every winter, the bulk of scrape increasing with the age of the plantation. The scrape, like the soft turpentine, was emptied directly into barrels ready for market, but the scrape had to be trodden into the barrel.

On large establishments, barrels were made on the plantation. Every fifth man in a gang of hands might be a cooper, engaged the year through in collecting his materials and providing the others with barrels. When the planter hired a cooper, by the day or month, the slave's task was five barrels a day, and his wage was 25 cents a barrel when all materials were furnished him.

"Strength Through Struggle"

The Chronological and Historical Record of the African-American Community
in Wilmington, North Carolina 1865-1950

By: William M. Reaves
Edited by Beverly Tetterton

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF HENRY B. GREEN

The application for a federal pension for the widow of Henry B. Green states that Green was born in Raleigh, NC c. 1841 and enlisted in the Union Army on October 9, 1866, at Washington, DC, in Company A, 40th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Troops. He was promoted from Private to Corporal, September 1, 1867. On April 28, 1869, he was discharged at Jackson Barracks, Louisiana, by reason of having been rendered a supernumary non-commissioned officer by consolidation of regiments.

After his military service, he moved to Smithville (Southport), NC and lived there with his wife, Lizzie, and two children. A native of Brunswick County, Lizzie Green, age 36, died August 30, 1883, of malarial fever in Smithville, and is buried in Pine Forest Cemetery, Wilmington. Green's second wife was Anna Reddick, whom he married in 1888. The couple had four children—Marie; Octavia, born August 28, 1892; Rayyardener, born April 18, 1897; and Armella, born April 3, 1894. At the time of her pension application (1899-1901), Anna Green, 32, was living at 406 South Seventh Street and suffered from acute rheumatism.

The WILMINGTON MESSENGER wrote on March 3, 1899, the following: "On the day of the race conflict in Wilmington, on the 10th of last November, Henry B. Green, the colored sergeant on Mayor S. P. Wright's police force, left here and went to Philadelphia. During the Civil War, he served in the federal army and contracted rheumatism, and since he has been in Philadelphia, he has been at death's door. The physicians there informed him that if he expected to save his life he must have one of his feet amputated. He decided that if he had to have the operation performed, he would come to Wilmington and have it done. He consequently left Philadelphia and arrived here yesterday morning. He is now lying very low at his home on Seventh Street, between Orange and Ann Streets, and is not expected to live. He longed to get back to Wilmington, saying he preferred to die here than among strangers in Philadelphia." Henry B. Green died May 26, 1899, of rheumatism and kidney disease in Wilmington.

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**THIRTY YEARS OF POLITICS:
BLACK POLITICANS AND THE EARLY REPUBLICAN PARTY**

The Republican Party of North Carolina was created on March 27, 1867. Armed with their right to vote, black Wilmingtonians flocked to the Republican party, determined to make themselves heard and to hold office in a city and a state that had only recently ignored them. During the 1868 election, New Hanover County had 6,258 registered voters and 3,968 were Republicans.

The party began nominating black men for every possible office from state legislator to local assessor. One of three local delegates elected to the 1868 Constitutional Convention was black. He was Abraham H. Galloway, a runaway slave from Brunswick County, who returned to the area after the war.

Abraham H. Galloway was born c. 1836, a slave in Brunswick County. In the 1870's, Galloway was interviewed by William Still, who published his findings in a book entitled, THE UNDERGROUND RAIL ROAD. In the book, there is the following, a synopsis of which is given here: Abraham was owned by Milton Hawkins, a chief engineer on the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad, who lived in Wilmington. Even though, Hawkins was a kindly master, the young lad was not content and "felt that slavery was wrong and toiling all year for a master and not for himself was intolerable." In 1857, Abraham and his friend, Richard Eden, resolved to find a way to freedom and decided to try the Underground Railroad. They contacted a captain of a schooner, who was going to Philadelphia. The captain agreed to have the young men board his vessel and hide. Escaping on the ship, which was loaded with tar, rosin and turpentine, the young men were exhausted by the time they arrived in Philadelphia. They were quickly interviewed by the Vigilance Committee of the Philadelphia branch of the Underground Railroad. The Committee arranged for their care while in Philadelphia and made arrangements for their safe conduct to Canada. Later, Abraham made his way to Ohio.

While in the North, Galloway received an education and became an ardent abolitionist. In 1862, he came back to North Carolina, working as a spy in the secret service of the Union Army, under General Benjamin F. Butler. Returning to the north, he advocated the employment of black troops in the Federal Army at the National Convention of Colored Citizens in the U.S. in Syracuse, NY, in 1864, which established the National Equal Rights League to secure political and civil rights for blacks.

By 1867, he returned to Wilmington for good, and became active in political affairs of the day. He attended the Freemen's, which met in Raleigh in September and October of 1865, and represented New Hanover County at the North Carolina Constitutional Convention in 1868. In 1868-70, he served as a Republican Senator from New Hanover County, in the North Carolina Legislature.

On September 1, 1870, he died at his mother's residence in Wilmington before the new legislative session began. His funeral was attended by a very large crowd and was held from St. Paul's Episcopal Church. A wife and two children survived him.