



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 874, SHALLOTTE, NC 28459

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MISSION STATEMENT

To collect, preserve, study, evaluate and publicize the history of Brunswick County, NC. To devote meetings to presentation of materials about Brunswick County and the Lower Cape Fear through lectures, slices, and discussion. To publish a newsletter which contains news of the Society's activities, research papers and articles that pertain to genealogy.

Society Officers

President: Gwen Causey
Vice-President: James Green
Secretary: Roberta Brady
Treasurer: Sandra Ward
Directors: Don Hickman
 Jim Marlowe
 Dave Lewis
Newsletter Editor: Dave Lewis

BCHS Website

www.bchs1764.org
Webmaster: Jimmy Green

AUGUST MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC AUGUST 08, 2011 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on August 08th at the Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation Building, 795 Ocean Highway West, Supply, NC. The meeting begins at 7:30 P.M. We always meet the 2nd Monday in February, May, August and November.

The February 2011 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* begins the 51st volume. Volume I, Number 1 was printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletter from September 1961 to November 2009 can be found in the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill, NC and at the New Hanover County Public Library North Carolina Room in Wilmington, NC. There were no publications of Volume 17, #3 & 4 (1977) and Volume 18, #1 (1978).

Details for the August *BCHS* meeting were unavailable at printing time but as always you can expect a very informative program. Make your plans to attend.

FISHING ON THE BEACH

"With the Spots A-running and the Mulletts A-jumping"

By: Ouida Hewett

As I remember from the yesteryears and hearing my dad talk about "Fishing on the Beach" many times... "Fishing on the Beach" was a tradition that most of the farmers participated in during the fall and winter months after the crops were harvested, the canning all done, the pigs in the peanut patch fattening up or was it down... for "hog killing" time.



Robert Peter Robinson, Sr.

Mr. Peter Robinson, who owned Robinson Beach, now part of Holden Beach would load up his sons, John, Harry and R.P. Jr. in their Model T truck and head for the "back woods" to get a fishing crew together. My dad, Gaston Hewett and his brothers, Dennis, Horry and Luther would join him. The Haynes Clemmons boys, Olen, Sprunt and Alton, some more Hewett's... James Thomas, Lucian and his sons,

Ernest, Ed, James "Tib" and maybe Tommy along with Tinkie Johnson and Paul Hewett would make up the crew. I think there might have been some more families that has slipped my mind today.

"The Look Out" for the crew consisted of Lucian and James Thomas Hewett, two brothers with sharp eyes. They would be life guards as of today. They would walk about 500 or 1000 yards back east from the fishing shack and spot the mulletts running/jumping in the ocean. Lucian was nicknamed "Tooper" but I always called him Uncle Lucian. When they spotted the mulletts, they began waving their hats, whistling and hollering "The Mulletts are Jumping. I see a big school of them."

So the sea crew manned the boat with the huge net atop and began spreading it around the fish. The land crew held on the net on shore and pulled in the fish. They would load the net with 500 to 1000

pounds of row mulletts. It took about 10 to 20 minutes to load the net up. Then came the fun part, "picking the fish out of the net, splitting them for salting down and then on to shipping barrels of mulletts all over the coast to New York and other northern states." They shipped by truck and by ship. My great grandfather Samuel A. Lewis was captain of one of these ships that carried goods and brought back goods to the area. That's another story I'll do for you someday.

The net caught mulletts, blue fish, croakers, spots and yellow tails that I remember. The land crew had pans/pails of water ready for the cleaning. As they opened the mulletts up on the back side and took out the "innards", another crew was ready to wash them thoroughly and get ready for the third on to salt'em down. They packed 25, 50, and 100 lb. barrels. Shipping up north and western Carolina was by mule, truck and rail, too.

The fish roe from the mulletts was saved, sold and canned too. You learned at an early age not to eat much "green" roe. Talkin' about industrial strength ex-lax... It did not have that exact effect after they were salted for awhile or canned.

"Spots are Running" came the next order of fishing. Some crew members had hooks and lines, some cast nets, some gill nets and some still had the old hauling seine they had used for the mulletts. The larger gill nets were fished at the Robinson Fishing Shack. The fishermen would run the net out in the ocean, have a buoy and anchor on that end and as the spots came by they entangled in the net so they could pull them in. This would occur at night mostly and they would pull the nets in two or three times each night. They took the "Innards" out while splitting the spots on the back side, salted them down and shipped them just like the mulletts.

It was a great treat for the "Fishing Crew" to invite their families over for a day of dining, working and enjoying a day from the farms. Kenneth, Mom and I went with lots of families for "A Day at the Beach" with dad. We had dunes on the beach then, very few houses and everything was beautiful, serene, lovely and quiet. I don't remember who we rode with or how we went across the waterway, whether it was by mule and cart or vehicle. I do

remember riding in a cart one time across the waterway on low tide. I also remember the seafood aroma of "Dinner Cooking on the strand next to the fishing shack".

"Cooking on the Beach" in a Dutch oven over live coals was a tradition passed down through the ages. You had an iron skillet (spider), pot and Dutch oven that could bake, fry, roast or stew in the same oven. I saw fish, rice, corn and bread all in the same Dutch oven. Some were flat on the bottom and some had legs that the cook could keep a fire hot underneath the pot. Now we call it a "Clam Bake" and pretend it's the old fashion way. We cook a "Clam Bake" and have a party with lots of fun, right at home. Back in the 20's, 30's and 40's this was a way of live for lots of people who love a whole meal in one pot. How about you?

The fishermen would take enough supplies from home for a week. They left on Monday morning before day light and returned Friday night or Saturday to take care of the chores at home and on the farms. A skeleton crew stayed at the beach and sometimes they would send word "out back" to come back and help. They would be loaded down with mullets or spots.

Most everyone went to church on Sunday. Mr. Peter Robinson founded Union Chapel during these hard times. He was a Baptist but founded the "Holiness" church there. It's still going strong with a great congregation and still at the same location with many more additions and renovations to the beginning structure.

Canning fish became popular with the Holden family. My Grandpa Jesse Holden and his brother Willie were also members of the fishing crew. Grandpa would bring home mullets for mom to can for the winter months. "Boil hard for three hours" was their motto so the fish would keep fresh all winter long. They taste like salmon. This is a great snack or for a whole meal with rice or potatoes and a pan of baked corn bread. I don't even like mullets, but I have to agree this is a good meal.

The last time I visited "Fishin' On The Beach" Acie Robinson, nephew of Mr. Peter Robinson was running the Fish Shack and Crew. He had a

younger group of men from the area helping him but using the same methods that Mr. Peter used in his time. They had a new location on Holden Beach near the East end. Acie invited me and the kids to come over and get some blue fish. I love them filleted on a hoagie roll with tarter sauce. That is a treat. He had blue fish, croaker, spots, yellow tails and some trout that day with the mullets. That was in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

While there we encountered a furious tourist lady that came that day as a "One Lady Army" to make Acie stop his fishing on the beach. Acie just laughed and kept right on fishing and going about his duties. I asked her, "Where do you think the fish came from that you purchased at the fish market or had eaten at the restaurant?" She exclaimed "I don't know." I said back to her with a smile, "right here, just like these men are doing" and she left.

A well known family of Holden Beach would cut the fish nets at night so they would drift out to sea. They were caught in the act, too. After this incident, they went to the town council protesting and complaining thus destroying "Fishing on the Beach" for Acie and all the crew that worked with him.

We could all live together, the tourist and the fishermen and still keep a beautiful beach. There is nothing better than; Fresh Fish or Fresh Seafood, whether it came from the beach, ocean or rivers.

"Fishing on the Beach" is just a memory now, ... that we so enjoyed while we worked when I was a kid.

News Article from the SOUTHPORT STANDARD

C. Ed Taylor, Editor & Proprietor

May 16, 1901

The most terrible tornado that has ever been known passed through a section of Shallotte township on Sunday night, about 9 o'clock. Commencing about six miles from this place it blew down the kitchen of Mr. John Hewett, also some fencing.

Coming eastward it next struck the farm of Mr. "Judge" Mints. His kitchen, barn, stables and all out buildings, except a smokehouse, were destroyed, with all fencing in the track of the storm. The stable roof fell on two horses, but somehow they were caught between joists, and when the roof was removed they were found to be uninjured. His loss is said to be five or six hundred dollars.

It then crossed a swamp, blew down the kitchen of Mr. T. L. Downing, who lives on the Knox Estate, and badly wrecked his dwelling. Nearly all of his kitchen furniture was smashed. This place has one of the best orchards in this part of the county, but nearly all of the larger trees were either broken off or torn up by the roots.

After leaving here it seemed to disappear until within about a mile of this place, when it dipped down again, totally destroying two buildings belonging to Mr. Eudorous Holden, and several hundred pannels{sic} of fence. Then it struck Mr. J. W. Cannon's place, blowing down his kitchen and store, destroying and damaging all of his goods. His barn was badly wrecked, his smokehouse turned nearly one quarter around, and his fencing torn to pieces. Some part of the roof was found a mile distant. But strange to say no one was hurt, so far as we have learned.

Friends and neighbors flocked in to replace fencing and clear away the debris. Probably 150 men, in all, worked all day, clearing the wreckage away.

The tornado seemed to travel in a zigzag pattern from N.W. and S.W.

A heavy rain, accompanied by much thunder and lightning, made this disaster more terrible. Several who saw this say it looked like a large bright yellow spot moving rapidly with a horrible roar.

Will of James C. Stanland

I JAMES C. STANLAND of the County of Brunswick and State of North Carolina

Being of Sound mind and memory, but Consider-

ing the uncertainty of my earthly existence, do make and declare this my last will and testament, in manner and form following that is to Say: first that my Executrix, hereinafter named Shall provide for my body a decent burial, Suitable to the wishes of my relations and friends, and pay all funeral expenses, together with my just debts, howsoever and to whomsoever owing, out of the monies that may first come into her hand, as apart or parcel of my estate

Item i give and devise to my beloved wife twenty acres of land so as to include the plantation in the north end of the tract whereon i now live So as to include my mansion house, all out houses and other improvements, to have and to hold to her, the Said MIMMA for and during the term of her natural life in Satisfaction for, and in lieu of, her dower and thirds of and in all my real estate

Item I give and devise to my Eldest Son Asa, all of that tract of land whereon he now lives, twenty acres to have and to hold to him and and [repeated on new page] his heirs in fee Simple forever

Item I give and devise to my Son John D. all of that tract of land whereon he now lives twenty acres to have and to hold to him and his heirs, in fee simple forever.

Item I give and devise to my youngest Son Steward twenty acres of land a joining his Brother John D. Stanland to have and to hold to him and his heirs in fee simple forever

Item I give and devise to my daughter all the tract of land whereon I now live , ^{twenty acres} [inserted here above line] except the life estate of my wife, devised in a former Item of this my will, to have and to hold to her and her heirs, in fee simple forever

Item I give and bequeath to my Said beloved wife all my beds and furniture, all the household and kitchen furniture all of my cattle: hogs and one sorrel mare and cart: All the crop of Every description that may be upon the plantation wereon I now live and all the provisions on hand at the time of my death

Item I give and bequeath to Mary Simmons after

my wives death my mare crop stock and plantation and tools during and assign absolutely forever and lastly I do hereby constitute and appont my wife Mimma my lawful Executrix to all intents and purposes, to Execute this my last will and testament, according to the true in tent and meaning of the Same, and Every part and Clause thereof hereby revoking and declaring uterly voyd all other wills and testaments by me heretofore made

In witness whereof, I, the Said James C. Stanland, do hereunto set my hand and seal this this [word repeated on new line] Feby 2^{cond} of A. D. 1860

James C. Stanaland (Seal)

Signed Sealed, published and declared by the Said JAS C. STANLAND to be his last will and testament, in the presence of us who at his request and in his presence do Subscribe our names as witnesses thereto

John H. Brooks
Thomas X (his mark)
Simmons

Transcribed by Melanie Willis from an original Xeroxed copy, after having read the original at the North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh, NC on September 18, 2004.

About the transcription:

- I have retained as closely as possible all the spellings, misspellings, grammar and punctuation of the original, except where otherwise noted.
- There are no periods at the ends of sentences, except at the end of the item concerning John D. Stanland. There are periods where there should be commas. I have typed commas in their place.
- Although they are not so in the original, I have typed proper names in all caps, except for signatures. Although paragraphs are indicated in the original, there are no blank spaces between paragraphs. I have put spaces between the paragraphs for easier reading.

THE EAGLES ISLAND CAUSEWAY: A NOTE ON TRAVEL IN COLONIAL, NORTH CAROLINA

By Alan D. Watson

Remember the rugged wilds of eastern North Carolina, enclaves of the past, reminders of days gone by, before the hand of civilization laid waste to the state's natural beauty? Such is the story of Eagles Island, a large marsh island lying in the Cape Fear River fronting Wilmington. Once a scenic reminder of the Cape Fear's past, Eagles Island is presently succumbing to a network of roads and bridges, industrial pollution, and excited tourists anxious to view the battleship *North Carolina* which is anchored on the east side of the island.

Eagles Island, alias *Buzzards Island* or the *Great Island*, begins at the point where the Cape Fear River divides to form the Brunswick River. The island contains the land lying between the Brunswick, Cape Fear, and Northeast Cape Fear rivers and extending to Navassa where the Brunswick intercepts the Cape Fear River. Despite the coincidence of large numbers of eagles, buzzards, and other fowl in the area, the name of the island derived not from the birds but from Richard Eagles, the elder, who came to the Cape Fear from South Carolina about 1735 and purchased much land on the island.

Today Eagles Island is linked to New Hanover County by a medium level bridge and is crossed by highway combining US routes 17, 74 and 76, the first a principal north-south artery along the eastern coast. In fact, Highway 17 follows closely the first and only road which connected eastern North and South Carolina before the American Revolution. Known as the King's Highway or the Great Road, the route extended from South Carolina through Shallotte, Wilmington, New Bern, Bath, and Edenton into Virginia. Not surprisingly, the most difficult passage of the entire road was that through Eagles Island.

As overland traffic increased during the eighteenth century, the North Carolina provincial assembly decided to ease the burden of travelers by authorizing the construction of a more substantial road across Eagles Island. Therein lay the origins of state support for highway construction in the southeast and, more specifically, the foundation of the first Eagles Island highway. The assembly bestowed the dubious favor of building the road upon Colonel William Dry, a luminary of the Cape Fear

region. Dry was one of the wealthiest men in the colony, related to the leading families of North and South Carolina, and participant in local and provincial government.

In 1764 the assemble approved legislation instruction Dry to mark off and complete construction of a road across Eagles Island within three years. Specific directions were given for building the highway. It had to be sixteen feet wide and one foot above high water mark at spring tides with well-cleared ditches on either side not less than six than six feet from the edge of the road. In addition the assemble demanded that bridges be secure and that the entire road be convenient for carriages to pass. Dry was subjected to the penalty of a large fine for failure to build and maintain the road in good repair.

In order to reward the colonel for his efforts, the assembly took the highly unusual action of investing Dry forever with the right to operate the two ferries from the island across the Brunswick and Cape Fear Rivers and to collect the proceeds from the traffic. This meant that Dry owned the ferry rights and highway just as he did other real property. Since this promised to be one of the most traveled roads in the province, and ferrykeeping was a fairly lucrative business anyway, the colonel thought that he had concluded a good deal. However, he had reckoned without the wilds of Eagles Island.

The marsh stoutly resisted Dry's efforts as one today can well imagine upon viewing the bottomless morass of rush which composes a great part of the island. The next year the assembly referred to Dry's road as a "causeway," certainly a more appropriate term since a causeway indicated a construction over boggy, miry sites. A causeway or "causey," well-known in North Carolina even in the twentieth century, consisted of logs placed in the direction of the proposed road and covered with dirt over which were laid small pines or other trees. A tentative affair to be sure, but it was the best effort the colonials could muster under the adverse circumstances.

Naturally causeways necessitated continuous repair and proved a woefully inadequate means of com-

bating very wet conditions. Dry's road was no exception; he made virtually no effort to repair the thoroughfare, and travel accounts show that Eagles Island was the most feared stretch of major highway in the province. Postal inspector Hugh Finlay left a vivid description of the road in his journal: "The Island is a swamp, the road is laid with logs of trees, many of them are decayed, so that the causeway is quite broken and full of large holes, in many places 'tis with difficulty that one can pass it on foot, with a horse 'tis just possible. Every person passing and repassing is in danger of breaking a leg or arm, yet from year to year it is complained of and yearly grows worse."

Why was Dry not prosecuted for failing to maintain the road in proper repair? Well, among the colonel's many relations was Thomas McGuire, a son-in-law and the King's attorney general of the province. While many indictments were lodged against Dry, Somehow McGuire always found reason to avoid prosecution. Together, nature and injustice triumphed.

In 1777 Dry sold his white elephant along with the ferry rights to Samuel Campbell where they were incorporated in the assets of the Wilmington merchant firm of Campbell and Hogg. A little later the Eagles Island causeway served its first useful purpose by enabling the Americans to delay the British under Cornwallis who were trying to enter Wilmington. During the Civil War, on a firmer causeway, Union and Confederate troops fought in hand to hand combat. Eventually engineering advances enabled the state to place a hard surface road across the island to furnish a secure entrance to the city of Wilmington, but before the American Revolution it is no wonder that most colonials agreed that North Carolina's road system was the worst in the British colonies, particularly after they had traveled the Eagles Island Route.

Transcribed as written: Taken from the "Notes on the Brunswick River and it's Environs," compiled by William M. Reaves, 1988, Wilmington, NC.

Editors note: Look for more information on Eagles Island causeway and the river ferries in future *Newsletter* articles.

Manuscript on the Architectural History and Historical Identity of the County of Brunswick, North Carolina

Transcribed as written.

Meetings were held in June and July with Leslie Bell, Director of Planning and Community Development, and the manuscript committee for selecting a consultant for professional services towards the completion of the manuscript.

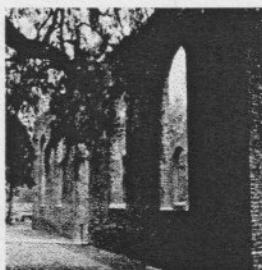
As of July 20, the selection has been narrowed to two firms: Landmark, Preservation Asso. With Dan Pezzoni and MdM Historical Consultants, Inc. out of Durham, NC. A final decision should be reached soon and if available will be announced at the August *BCHS* meeting. Stay tuned for more details on this most important project.

Demsey L. Hewett

Dempsey L. Hewett, Republican Representative from Brunswick County, was born October 18, 1868, in Brunswick County, N.C. Son of Llewellyn and Sarah Carolina (Mintz) Hewett. Attended Wake Forest College, 1904, Preacher, Representative in the General Assembly, 1915 and 1917. Mason: Jr. O.U.A. M.; W.O.W.; Farmers' Union, Baptist. Married to Miss Mattie D. Mintz. Eight children. Address: Shallotte, N.C.

Source: North Carolina Manual. 1919. Published by the North Carolina Historical Commission.

Area Events



Brunswick Town/ Fort Anderson Historic Site

August 13: 2nd Saturday Program. Bands at Brunswick. Local artisans will be onsite to demonstrate their crafts.

September 03: War Comes to Brunswick. Commemoration of Spain's capture of Brunswick in September 1748. Colonial militia will demonstrate drill and weapons of the colonial era.

October 29: The public is invited to take a journey into America's past with costumed interpreters demonstration life in an 18th century port town. Many interactive activities and demonstrations including toys and games, doll making, weaving, candle dipping, colonial militia, and much more.

All events begin at 10AM and end at 4PM. Call 371-6613 for more details.

Membership Application ... Invite a Friend to Join Brunswick County Historical Society

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

New: _____ or Renewal _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Mail this form with your check to: P.O. Box 874, Shallotte, NC 28459

Annual Dues: Individual \$15 Life Membership \$150