



# 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, slides, and discussion. To publish a newsletter which contains news of the Society's activities, research papers and articles that pertain to genealogy.

## Society Officers For the 2014 - 2016 Term

President: David Holden  
Vice-President: James Green  
Secretary: Roberta Brady  
Treasurer: Gwen Causey  
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 10, 2015 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on August 10th 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 2015 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* began the 56th Volume. Volume I, Number 1 was printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletter from September 1961 to May 2014 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).

Program for the August meeting has not been finalized at time of printing but be assured that it will be informative as always. Make your plans to attend.

## Cargo for Sale

From *The Wilmington Chronicle*, September 24, 1795. Transcribed as written.

State of North Carolina Brunswick County  
NOTICE is hereby given, that the cargo of the schooner, "Mary and Helen," stranded on Tube's Beach near Shalott Inlet, consisting of 2,575 feet pine boards, 5M. Dressed R.O.H. staves; 38 BBLS, turpentine; 30 BBLS, varnish; and 50 BBLS of tar (more or less as it lies on the beach) will be sold there at public auction, at the hour of 12 o'clock on Thursday, the 24th inst. Conditions, cash.  
James Allen, Captain, JNO Johnston, Shipper

## Merchant Marines, Wilmington Shipyard and the Liberty Ship

America's wartime merchant fleet made one of the more important contributions to victory in World War II. An all-volunteer civilian workforce of Merchant Mariners sailed thousands of vessels in harm's way throughout that global conflict. These men paid a high price for their success, suffering the highest casualty rate of any service.

Without their support, our armed forces could not have even gotten overseas, much less been properly supplied as they fought their way to victory. A major element of America's wartime merchant fleet was a huge class of vessels known as the Liberty Ships.

More Liberty Ships were built than any other class of sea-going vessels in the history of the world. Numbering 2,710, they were all mass-produced in less than five years. This astounding accomplishment took place in the middle of a world war that placed extreme demands on the capabilities of the United States and its allies.

Not only did the men and women of America build Liberty Ships at an unprecedented rate, they also first constructed entire new shipyards for the sole purpose of building Liberty Ships. One of these shipyards was in North Carolina.

World War II began on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. During the next sixteen months, enemy submarine, surface raider and aerial attacks seriously crippled the Allies' war effort in Europe. A huge number of merchant ships carrying vital military equipment, supplies and troops were sunk by the Axis. England's very survival depended on such shipments arriving safely in large numbers. However, Great Britain's war-ravaged industries could not produce replacement ships in sufficient numbers.

The United States realized that if Great Britain fell, our country would have no allies left in Western Europe. Months before the attack on Pearl Harbor forced the United States to enter World War II; our nation began providing invaluable assistance to England. Under an innovative Lend-Lease program

conceived by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and England's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, arms and equipment were allowed to be sent to any nation deemed vital to the defense of the then-neutral United States.

Under this authority, two private shipyards in America, one on each coast, started building sixty commercial ships for Great Britain. The British provided a simple-to-build design that dated back to 1879. They were old-fashioned and had coal-fired boilers and technically obsolete reciprocating engines. But they were very utilitarian, and could be constructed very quickly.

Commonly referred to in maritime circles as 'tramp' steamers, their original design was slightly enlarged and given the name Ocean Class by the British. These ships were capable of carrying ten thousand tons of cargo and traveling at eleven knots. Coal-fired boilers were specified instead of more modern, oil-fired units because England had plentiful coalfields, but no indigenous supplies of fuel oil.

Our own merchant marine was in bad shape in 1941. The nation's civilian fleet largely consisted of ships that had been built as part of an Emergency Fleet Program near the end of World War I. Because of technological advances, these ships were rapidly becoming obsolete and non competitive in commercial maritime markets, and of limited value to the Navy as auxiliary support vessels. In addition there were not nearly enough of them.

Surviving U.S. shipyards were in no better shape. The industry had seen few new orders after 1919 because of a surplus of ships and the impact of The Great Depression. By 1941, the nation's shipbuilding capacity was but a fraction of its size during World War I.

A few years earlier, as a part of the nation's economic recovery effort, the Merchant Marine Act of 1936 was conceived by President Roosevelt and rapidly pushed through Congress that summer. This sweeping legislation was aimed at providing more jobs for American industry and to restore the American Merchant Marine to a position of prominence in the world. Responsibility for this work

was entrusted to a new organization: the United States Maritime Commission.

The Commission developed a bold plan. The primary purpose of its plan was to subsidize the design and construction of hundreds of modern ships and then lease them to American shipping interests. The plan also called for the government to pay for US Navy-approved additions, obliquely referred to as "National Defense Features" that would enable ships contracted for by the Maritime Commission to be capable of quick conversion to serve as naval auxiliaries in wartime.

The Commission initially authorized the construction of fifty vessels. By the end of 1940, it became apparent that was not going to be nearly enough ships to provide for America's defense, or support the needs of its allies. So in January 1941, President Roosevelt announced an additional \$350 million shipbuilding program. In the next few years, this program was expanded many times over, far exceeding anyone's expectations. The program's goal was simple and stark: ***Build ships faster than the enemy could sink them.***

By the end of World War II, America's industrial arsenal had produced almost six thousand merchant ships and the greatest fleet of fighting ships the world has ever seen. The largest, and most famous class of merchant ships built during World War II were the Liberty Ships, initially referred to as "Ugly Ducklings" by President Roosevelt. Between 1941 and 1945, an astounding 2,710 of these famous vessels were built.

The urgent need for large numbers of new cargo vessels came at a time when domestic facilities for building ships and producing their marine equipment were already fully engaged in a massive naval expansion program. America's industrial might was simply not up to an additional task. More shipbuilding capacity was obviously needed.

The Maritime Commission's official classification for the Liberty Ships was "EC2-S-C1". The "EC" designated an "emergency cargo" ship. The "2" indicated the ship's large size with a waterline length between 400 and 450 feet. The "S" designated a steam engine and "C1" the specific ship design and modification number.

The construction of 2,710 Liberty Ships in less than five years truly constituted a production miracle. It was a feat made even more impressive because of numerous other major programs underway during World War II. Not the least of the other programs was the necessity to build several new shipyards dedicated to Liberty Ship production.

The average cost for a Liberty Ship was \$2 million (in 1945 dollars). It was initially felt that if a ship could make more than one trip it had paid its way. Fifty of these sea-going workhorses were lost on their maiden voyages! However, only 196 of the 2,710 Liberty Ships produced (7% of the total number built) were lost during the war, including ships lost due to storms, groundings or other non-combative related misfortunes.

Quite obviously, the construction miracle met and surpassed the initial program goal...

***Build ships faster than the enemy could sink them.***

The North Carolina Shipbuilding Corporation built 243 ships in Wilmington between 1941 and 1945.

A Charlotte-based firm, the V. P. Loftis Company, participated with the Wilmington-based firm of Orrell and Underwood in the construction of a completely new shipyard near Wilmington, North Carolina. Their starting point was a combination of riverfront woodland, sand hammocks and tidal flats located on the east bank of the Cape Fear River slightly south of downtown, on the site of the present N.C. State Port property.

In less than a year, they created a 57-acre industrial complex at a cost of a little over \$5 million. The Wilmington yard was organized and started up by a small team of veteran shipbuilders from the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company of Newport News, Virginia. Homer L. Ferguson, the parent firm's president and a native of Asheville, North Carolina, personally selected the undeveloped site, and located just south of Wilmington.

Only 400 of the thousands of Carolinians employed by the North Carolina Shipbuilding Corporation had any prior shipbuilding experience. At its peak, the Wilmington yard employed 21,000 people and had the best productivity of any of the Liberty ship-

builders. They expended only 70% of the average number of man-hours needed to build the Liberty ship. Roughly 30 percent of shipyard workers were African American, many in skilled positions. Although "Jim Crow" was observed in cafeterias and locker rooms, work stations were completely desegregated, following practice at the parent yards in Newport News, Va.

The Wilmington yard was one of the original emergency yards. Created in 1941, it initially had six shipways. This number was later increased to nine, along with expanded support facilities, requiring an additional eighty acres. This work took place in the midst of a hectic shipbuilding program. When completed, this industrial complex was one of Carolina's largest, built at a total cost over \$20 million.

After the war, the yard's facilities were held in reserve by the Maritime Commission until the 1950s, when this once-invaluable shipbuilding resource was liquidated. Today, little remains to mark where this emergency facility once hummed night and day.

The vast majority of the shipyard's employees who toiled on the shipways and in the shops at Wilmington at the peak of activity were farmers, fishermen and females. The same was true in the other emergency shipyards around the county that were dedicated to building Liberty Ships. People who had never before even seen an ocean-going vessel quickly learned how to perform one or more repetitive tasks with great efficiency.

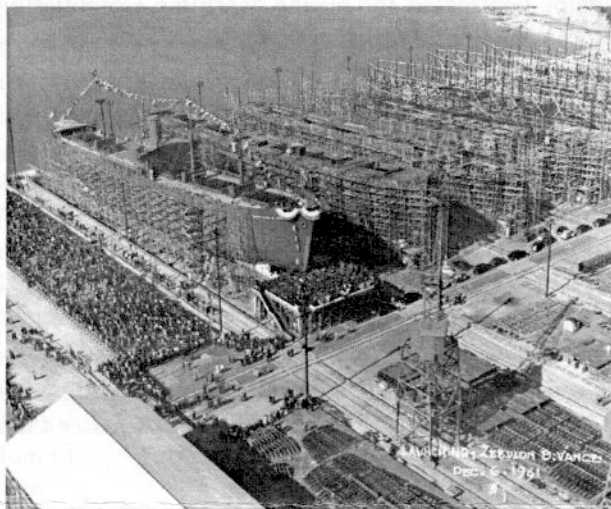
As Carolina shipbuilders gained experience, the number of man hours required came down. By 1943, the Wilmington yard was expending only 70% of the national average.

Hull #1 at North Carolina Shipbuilding was named in honor of Zebulon B. Vance, a former governor of North Carolina. Her keel was laid May 22, 1941, only three and a half months after construction of the shipbuilding facility had been started. In spite of this situation, and through the use of advanced subassembly techniques, the ship was nearly complete when launched.

The first Wilmington-built Liberty slid down the ways amidst much celebration on December 6, 1941; just hours before the Japanese attack at Pearl

Harbor.

Wilmington's Liberty ships were frequent named for historical figures from North and South Carolina. Among those honoring figures from the Lower Cape Fear were the Cornelius Harnett, George Davis, Richard Caswell, Alexander Lillington, James Sprunt, Alfred Moore, John Merrick and John N. Maffitt.



Launching of the *SS Zebulon B. Vance*  
December 6, 1941

In all, 28 ships built at Wilmington were lost during the war; 23 were sunk by enemy action, 4 were sunk to form a breakwater during the Normandy invasion, and one ammunition ship exploded in the South Pacific.

By early 1946, when the last vessel, S.S. Santa Isabel, left the Wilmington yard, a total of 243 ships - of which 126 were Liberties - had been built there by the men and women of the Carolinas. Many of these workers were from Brunswick County including this editors Grandfather and father and several members of my wife's family from Randolph County. My Grandfather, being a man of few words, sailed as Chief Engineer during trial trips for the new ships. In his words the trial trips began by going out to sea at the end of the Cape Fear River but when the German U-Boats began firing torpedoes they kept the trips within the confines of the river.

Sources: *The Liberty Ships of World War II, Their Union County and other Carolina Connections.* Author, **Bill Lee**.

*What is the history of Liberty Ships being built in Wilmington during WWII.* Author, **Ben Steelman**, *Star News*, March 12, 2010.

## Camp Pretty Pond

The Cape Fear Area Girl Scouts was incorporated on September 5, 1944, and on December 24, 1946 Helen Jones, Executive Director of the Council, publicly announced her Christmas wish as "a permanent camp site for 1000 girls of the area." In February of 1947 the Board of Directors of the Council approved the cookie sale as a source for obtaining a permanent camp for the Girl Scouts.

On July 13, 1948 using the proceeds of five cookie sales, the council bought the land from International Paper Co. for \$1000, a low price taken as a sign of International Paper's generosity. "Cookies for Cabins" became the theme of the sixth annual cookie sale. The first building was to be a year-round lodge, but a major obstacle to be confronted was to secure the right of way for REA power lines. George Buist of Charleston, S.C. refused right of way over his property. This was soon corrected.

The Wilmington Star News on April 17, 1949 announced formation of a Citizens Committee to build a camp for girls. The committee consisted of Mrs. R. H. Holden, Chairwomen, H. A Marks, N. A. Avera, Hal J. Love, Mrs Frederick Willetts, Jr. and Roderick H. Holden.

Camp Pretty Pond is located adjacent to the Boiling Springs Lakes city limits in Brunswick County on East Boiling Spring Rd. off George II highway. The site contains 136 acres, including a large 63 acre pond after which the camp was named. The land is flat with sandy soil and many longleaf pine trees.

Early history of Brunswick County refers to Pretty

Pond in the 1700's. Reference is made to a lake being formed by a meteor, which released its clear water of drinkable quality from underground springs.

Plans for a 52'x30' lodge were drawn with an estimated cost of \$10,000. With \$1,440 from the sixth annual cookie sale in hand, Mrs. Holden calmly announced, "We'll get the lodge donated". She contacted J. Frederick Murray, a Wilmington contractor, who was so impressed with her enthusiasm that he drew up all of the specs and materials needed. M. H. Landers, a local engineer made fifteen free copies of the specs. The committee then began to contact suppliers in New Hanover and the surrounding counties. Invariably they asked, "Where are you going to get the labor"? Mrs. Holden's reply was, "If we cannot get the labor, all materials will be returned".

Carpenters Union 1165 under Henry Rouse promised all construction labor. Plumbing was completed by Bill Dryman's United Association of Plumbers, Steam Fitters local 329. H. L. Anderson's Painters Union painted the lodge. G.I. Students at the Vocational School of Bricklayers formed the foundation and chimney. S. E. Cooper improved the road, so supplies could be hauled in by the various trucking companies donating their services.

Construction began on the "Old Lodge" on March 30, 1949. Mrs. Holden, not known as an aggressive person and admitting that she didn't know a joist from a rafter, had become as bold as a lion in meeting every challenge to acquire donations of materials and labor. As an example Bolivia Lumber Co. donated cypress sills stating that pine was not good enough for the Girl Scouts. In all there were 70 contributors to the Lodge.

On March 5, 1950 and with over 3,000 people in attendance, the Lodge was dedicated on the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council. Plans began immediately for construction of an infirmary and 5 or 6 camper cabins to house 24 girls per session.

Twelve year old Helen Marie Romeo of Wilmington registered as the first camper on May 24, 1950. Between June 18 and July 15, 1950 Camp Pretty Pond opened with 24 girls per week. Helen Jones

was the Executive Director.

After renovations and expansions Camp Pretty Pond served as a resident camp site for the Cape Fear Council for the years 1950-1957. For overnight use camp capacity was 162 utilizing all beds and mattresses in existing buildings, cabin, and tent units. Additional campers were accommodated if they provided their own tents and beds. A six-foot wide asphalt path runs throughout the camp from the Old Lodge to the Galley with connections to various facilities and activity areas. The primary purpose of this path is to provide access through the sandy soils and wetlands for ADA persons and for regular pedestrian traffic.

On May 18, 1960 the Cape Fear Council merged



“Old Lodge”, oldest structure in the camp

with the Coastal Carolina Council headquartered in Goldsboro. Camp Pretty Pond was deeded to the Coastal Carolina Council and was reopened in 1962 as a waterfront camp for older girls featuring sailing, canoeing, motor boating, water skiing, and water sports under the direction of Janice Langston, Field Director for New Hanover, Columbus, Brunswick and Pender Counties and assisted by Kathy Crumpler. The galley, cooks cabin and pine lodge were added in 1974 and followed by a new infirmary and directors cabin in 1978. The camp received ACA Accreditation under Betsy Lee Hodges as Camp Director. The Girl Scout Council of Coastal Carolina Inc. oversaw the operations of the camp property until the next council merger in 2007. In 2007 The Girl Scout Council Inc. and

Pines of Carolina Girl Scout Council Inc. merged into one council to form Girl Scouts-North Carolina Coastal Pines.

Camp Pretty Pond was managed within the guidelines of a Conservation Easement held by the Nature Conservancy and a Safe Harbor Management Agreement. The camp strived to maintain the natural character of Pretty Pond and the surrounding longleaf pine forest. Camping, hiking, canoeing and low-impact recreation was encouraged in the camp's rustic natural beauty. Camp Pretty Pond was home to many endangered species of plants and wildlife, including the Venus flytrap, Pitcher Plants, the Red Cockaded Woodpecker, and the American Bald Eagle all viewable from a nature trail that encircles the pond.



In 2004, 350 acres of property contiguous to Camp Pretty Pond was sold to a developer. Having two story homes next to Camp Pretty Pond's road around the camp was unacceptable to the Council and would have been the end of Camp Pretty Pond as known by the Girl Scouts and their leaders. Six months later the Council entered into the Conservation Easement for protection-forever. This Conservation Easement allowed The Nature Conservancy to buy the adjoining land from the developers.

An announcement was made in February 2013 authorizing the sale of Camp Pretty Pond to “The Orton Plantation Group”. Orton Plantation said they are continuing the forestry restoration efforts established at Camp Pretty Pond, expanding the longleaf pine restoration initiatives and working

longleaf pine restoration initiatives and working closely with The Nature Conservancy and to continue best management practices.



Pretty Pond

Although managed differently, this parcel of land will forever be the home of the long leaf pine trees that completely covered the area when the first European explores arrived. This environment continues to provide a home and shelter for the wildlife and plants native to the area.

Sources: **John P. Braun**, Property Executive and **Krista N. Park**, Communications and Public Relations Director for the Girl Scouts, North Carolina Coastal Pines.

*Wilmington Star News*, February 23, 2013

*WECT News*, February 25, 2013 and March 1, 2013

**Beverly Wyckoff**, Past Chair of the Board of Directors of the Girl Scouts of Coastal Carolina, the Legacy Council in the Wilmington area.

### Camp Pretty Pond Song

As remembered by **Sandra Cagle Lewis**:

I'd rather be a Pretty Pond Girl than a multi-multi-millionaire.

I'd rather be a Pretty Pond Girl than to sit in the President's chair.

It's the grandest place that you ever did see.

If you don't believe it, come with me.

I'd rather be a Pretty Pond Girl than a multi-multi-millionaire.

### Projects for the BCHS Members

James Green is still scanning pictures and documents of historical Brunswick County submitted by BCHS members.

Many architectural pictures and historical documents are now on file and this project has been expanded to include pictures of Brunswick County people.

In preparation, make a list of the individuals in the photos with dates and information. All scanned photos are to remain the property of the BCHS and only for the preservation of Brunswick County history.

### 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