



# NEWSLETTER

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

VOLUME LVI

FEBRUARY 2015

NUMBER 1

Organized June 21, 1956

## 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](http://www.bchs1764.org)  
Webmaster: Jimmy Green

## FEBRUARY MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC FEBRUARY 9, 2015 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on February 9th 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 February 2015 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).

## Dues

**DUES** are now payable unless you are a **Life Member**. The annual dues are \$15.00 for an active member or \$150.00 to become a Life Member. Checks may be mailed to the **BCHS** in care of Gwen Causey or bring check or cash to the February meeting. Use the membership application found on page 7 for contact changes. Make checks payable to the **Brunswick County Historical Society**.

## Napoleon Barefoot

Napoleon Barefoot has been rescheduled and will be our guest speaker for the February meeting. His program will include Jayne E. Blair's book "Tragedy at Montpelier the untold story of Ten Confederate Deserters from North Carolina" which includes one of his ancestors.

## John G. Grisset

**Editors Note:** Will of John G. Grissett, born about 1778 and died after September 1858. Transcribed as written. Words followed by ? Were not readable.

State of North Carolina  
Brunswick County

I, John G. Grisset, a resident of the County and State aforesaid now in my eightieth year, do make and ordain this to be my last will and testament in manner and form following to wit.

**Item I** I direct that my body be decently interred in the family graveyard at the Ivy plantation where Isaac Generette now lives.

**Item II** I give and devise to Geo W Gause, son of Wm R Gause, Fifty acres of land, to be laid out so as to include the plantation where Wm. R. Gause now lives, to him the said George W. Gause, his heirs and assigns forever.

**Item III** I give and bequeath unto my granddaughter Sarah Ann Grisset, one bedsted one feather bed and necessary furniture therefore also Fifty dollars in money to be paid her by my Executors hereinafter named.

**Item IV** I give and bequeath unto my granddaughter Martha McKeithan, now the wife of Moses McKeithan, the sum of Five Dollars, to be paid to her by my Executors hereinafter named.

**Item V** All the rest and residue of my lands, tenements and hereditaments not herein before described, consisting in part of my homestead Danford? Sunimon? And Stosepan Island tracts of land. My negro slaves Virgil Shade and Joe, my horses, cattle, hogs and stock of every kind, with all my household and kitchen furniture — I give and devise unto my grandson John B. Gause, his heirs, Executors, administrators and assigns absolutely no fee Simple forever, hereby declaring that it is my will and desire, that my grandson John B. Gause foresaid Shall enjoy the residue of my estate aforesaid.

**Item VI** I hereby declare, nominate constitute and appoint my trusty friends John St Brook and Robert M. McRackin as my Executors to carry into effect this my last Will and Testament, in accordance with the tenor hereof, and with the laws of the State of North Carolina — Hereby utterly re-

voking all other wills by me at any time made.

In testimony whereof, I the said John G. Grisset have here unto set my hand and seal this 28th day of September AD 1858.

(Signed) John G Grisset

Signed, sealed and declared in our presence  
By John G Grisset to be his last will and Testament who in his presence and at his Request have subscribed our names as witnesses thereto

(Signed) D R Bennett

(Signed) Joel Reeves

## Leaving Brunswick County

During the last three hundred years or so many families have moved into Brunswick County. Most stayed, but some have moved on to other parts of North Carolina and beyond. Below is an oral history report given by Howard Hewett of Jones Creek, Texas to the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society.

Howard is the grandson of Albert Walker Hewett, Sr. and Addie Jane Lewis. Albert and William Edward Lewis of Brunswick County moved their families to the Federal Point area of New Hanover County about 1902. William drowned with the wreck of the Clarence H on December 9, 1903, and Albert later married Addie Jane Lewis, the daughter of William Lewis and Georgia Anne Andrews on January 26, 1911 in New Hanover County.

**The October-November "Pop-eyed" Mullet Run**  
Howard Hewett, August 20, 2014

In late October early November, the fall Atlantic mullet run was a major food supply for the Hewett-Lewis family as far back as the establishment of the clan on Boones Neck in Brunswick County in the late 1700's. (*editors note: more on Boones Neck coming in another Newsletter*) After moving to Federal Point my grandfather and my Dad maintained the family tradition of fishing.

Striped mullet are active schooling fish frequently

seen jumping and clearing the water by more than three times their body length. Some fish may be 24 inches in length. Their jumping habits have earned them the nickname "jumping mullet." Because of their thick, fleshy eyelids, they are also called "pop-eyed" mullet. This was the most common name used when referring to them by our family.

Striped "pop-eyed" mullet are native to North Carolina. In October-November when it's time to spawn, they move out of the bays and inlets, traveling along the shore on their way to off shore waters. The spawning process normally occurs at night. The female mullet can release from two to four million eggs per season. A mature mullet can average one to three pounds. The roe mullets in North Carolina may weigh as much as seven pounds. And, of course, the roe is a fall delicacy. Roe and grits are to die for!

During the mullet run, a family who could get a gill net around a school of mullet would be able to feed the family salted down mullet through the winter. This fact made it imperative that when the opportunity arrived, the family need to avail itself of a school of fish.

The story I want to relate took place before my tenth birthday (I think) just shortly after World War II. I had often referred to the story as Dad's "Can a Sunday mullet run be considered an "Ox in the Ditch"? On the way home from church this November Sunday afternoon, Dad spotted a large school of mullet just outside the surf. By the time we got home you could actually see this school up the beach from our front porch. For a family to claim rights to a school of fish, it was imperative that a spotter be placed along the shore opposite the fish. So Dad sent me to claim ownership and to follow the school of mullet down the beach toward the house.

As I left the house, Mother and Dad were discussing the religious aspects of violating another family tradition by following what we practiced. The observance of the Sabbath as slated in Isaiah 58: 13-14. "If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interest on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your

own way, serving your own interest, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the Lord. And I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

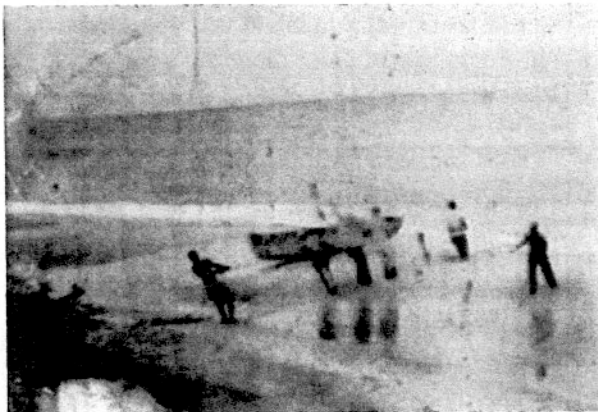
As Dad and Mother continued the discussion about this strong Christian principle and maybe grandmother, Addie Jane, was consulted as well. Dad made preparations with Uncle Crawford to get the boat in position on the beach. Now this did not take long because at this time of year, the boat and net was always ready. As the story goes, Dad and Crawford decided that in this particular situation, there was a need to provide winter food for the family, so they decided that the New Testament passage in Luke 14:5 would be the guiding principle for the day. As Jesus said, "if one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on the Sabbath." The school of fish that I was following was massive and the water was black with fish. When the wave would break, all you could see was large roe mullet. It was one of those magnificent schools of mullet.

Other fishermen only approached me one time, but I was recognized as Curtis's boy. The only thing they said was "tell you Dad to holler if he and Crawford needed any help." I've often thought about how easy it was to project possession of a school of fish by having an 8 to 9 year-old represent ownership in the late 40's. There was respect for the rights of possession and there were no questions or challenges. I wonder in today's world if people in the same situation would allow someone so young to represent family ownership and show respect for an unwritten entitlement.

When I was within 100 yards, Dad waved to me to come and get in the boat. The family boat was approximately 16-18 feet lapstreak with a high bow, high gunnels and a deck in the stern where the net was located. The stern sloped from the gunnels to the rail with a more rounded shape. It was a modified wine glass shape that was common to surf boats in the mid 1940-1950's. There were two seats for two oarsmen.

My job was to be sure the net fed out as we went around the school of mullet. These nets were called gill nets or seine nets. The net had a cork line on the top and a lead line on the bottom. It was approximately 8-10 feet in height. Dad and Crawford's net was approximately 100 yards long. On this particular day, we had a 25-yard slue running along the beach with a bar that was about 50 yards across with the breakers pounding on the edge of the bar.

To get a boat across the slue, transverse the bar and cross the breaker required a great deal of skill and timing not only to get the boat outside the wave action but to arrive just in time along with the fish. The action was never for the faint of heart. When Uncle Crawford said "let's take her to sea, Curtis," there was an adrenaline rush. I can tell you that Dad and Crawford were bulls when it came to their oaring skills. When the oars hit the water and they made their first pull your head would pop back and for every pull thereafter.



Pulling the Fishing Nets on the Beach

The staff on the beach end of the net was normally manned by another member of the family and beach goers who would work for a mess of fish. As we crossed the bar, I would continue to maintain the net as it feed out over the stern and would be sure it did not get hung up on anything in the boat. Once across the bar and seaward to the breakers creating a slight hook shape in the positioning of the net, we would pause to allow the fish to come to us.

On this occasion, Dad and Crawford discussed their concerns about the size of this school of mul-

let and the danger of damaging the net with all the pressure of thousands of pounds of fish. The decision was made to cut through the middle of the school allowing some to escape seaward. So we came back across the breakers with mullet jumping in the boat as well as across the boat. This process also created an adrenaline rush. Once ashore, we started pulling the staff back through the slue to the beach. By this time, we may have had 25-30 volunteers, which enhanced our ability to get the net ashore. The catch that day was several thousand pounds. Volunteers got all the fish they wanted. A large portion of the catch was sold to a fish house outside of Wilmington.

Grandmother was in charge of the family portion and preparing the mullet for salting. Our saltbox was in one of the bedrooms at grandmother's house. It was two feet deep by three feet wide and about 6 feet long. After that day's catch, all the family had their saltboxes filled to the top with filleted mullet and roe.

Lesson learned that November day: Only take what you need and do not waste resources.

*Editors Note: My GGrandfather, James Harker Lewis, also drowned with his brother William Edward Lewis on December 9, 1903 just offshore of Oak Island. Crawford was the son of William Lewis and Georgia Anna Andrews and also sailed with my grandfather, David Elton Lewis. As a child I remember Crawford as being a large man who certainly could have pulled the oars of a fishing skiff. This Hewett and Lewis family came from the Shell Point area of Brunswick County. More stories from these families to be printed in later additions of the Newsletter.*

### **John Nelson Bennett** **April 08, 1834 - June 02, 1901**

John Bennett was born and raised in Brunswick County near the South Carolina line to Samuel Bennett and Anne Mintz. He was married to Mary Elizabeth Biggs, daughter of John Biggs and Sarah Wells. They were the parents of eight children and are buried in the Zion United Methodist Church Cemetery near Leland.



He was elected to two terms in the Legislature and State Senate from his county and district. John kept a journal recording the years 1834-1864 before dying at his home in Winnabow after a long illness of dropsy and Brights disease. Here are the first two chapters with more coming later. Transcribed as written.

### Chapter 1: Parentage and Infancy

Within the last ten years I have commenced several journals; but for reasons which I thought good, I have destroyed them all. I have lately concluded to commence another, and I do not believe that I can give it a more appropriate introduction than by writing a sketch of my life as a preface for it.

I was born on the eighth day of April 1834, in Shallotte District Brunswick County, North Carolina, near the seashore, and about three miles from the South Carolina line. I am the seventh son and ninth child of my parents. Samuel Bennett, my father, was born in Brunswick County, North Carolina in the year 1792. He was poor, but respectable man; and though his education was quite limited, being just able to read and write, he was regarded by those best acquainted with him, as being a man of excellent common sense and sound judgment. He owned the plantation on which I was born and reared, and was quite and industrious farmer. He was a pious man, and a strict member of the Baptist Church several years preceding his death, which took place on the fifth day of August 1845.

I know very little of my paternal grandfather, except that his name was Joseph Bennett that he came from Anson County, N.C., that he was a soldier in General Greene's army in the time of the Revolutionary War, and that he was at the Battle of Guilford County House. My mother, who is still living, was born in the year 1800. Her maiden name was Ann Mints. She is very industrious, respectable, and pious woman, and is a member of the Baptist Church.

My maternal grandfather and grandmother were both pious Baptists, and were universally loved and respected by all who knew them. They lived to a great age, and died near the same time not many years since.

My parents had twelve children, nine sons and three daughters, all of whom lived to be grown. Alfred, the oldest, married Mary Long, settled, and is now living in Brunswick County. Samuel, the second, married Adeline Gore, settled, and is now living in Brunswick County. Ann the third was married to Elias Long. He moved to East Florida, returned and died soon after. Ann is now living a widow in Brunswick County. Martha E. the fourth, was married to John K. Gore. They moved to East Florida where they are now living. Henry P. the fifth moved to Georgia, and there married Caroline Wooten. He volunteered in the late war, and in less than two months afterwards died in the Hospital in Macon, Ga. Joseph J. the sixth never married. He volunteered in Co. G. 20 Regt. N.C.T., went to Virginia, and after fighting through a number of battles, died in the Hospital at Lynchburg, Va.

Asa B. the seventh married Susan H. Thomas of S.C. He volunteered in Co. G. 36 Regt. N.C.T., was captured at the taking of Fort Fisher, and died in prison at Elmira, New York. Solomon W. is still living unmarried. John Nelson the ninth is the subject of this sketch. Sarah J. the tenth was married to Reubin Long. They moved to East Florida where they are still living. Benjamin the eleventh is still living single. Jonathan the twelfth and last is still living unmarried.

Myself and all my brothers were rebels in the army of the South in the late war between the "so-called Confederate States" and the United States.

If I have ever been distinguished for any one thing, it is for my excellence of memory; and in that respect I am well qualified to write my history; although it may have nothing in it of any interest, save to myself and friends. But as I do not write it for the public, that need make no difference. I remember some things that occurred when I was about two years old; and I remember distinctly well when I was but three. The section of country in which I was brought up is thinly settled, and the chances for education were then as now very few. In fact almost the only educational advantages in that place and time were in the Free Schools, which were sometimes kept open three months in the year, and sometimes we only had a school once in two years. I was a healthy child, though not gener-

ally considered a very smart one.

The days of my childhood were mostly spent working on the farm, only going to school a little while sometimes in the Fall of the year.

#### Chapter 2nd: Boyhood and Early Education

In the Autumn after I was eight years old in the Spring, I commenced going to school for the first time, to a free school in my neighborhood, taught by William Chalker, He was a Yankee from the state of Connecticut, but at that time lived in South Carolina. He was at that time thought to be well qualified for his business, though he really had but little education; and he muttered and grumbled constantly. I went to school the greater part of three months that year, and the next Fall I went nearly three months more to the same man. The next year John Adkins commenced a school at the same place and taught eleven days, when the school was broken up. I went to Mr. Adkins school, and I think his education was considerable, though he was a very eccentric man and not at all used to teaching. The same year John S. Thomas taught three months at the same place, and continued to teach there three or four years more. I went to school to him the greater part of the time he taught there. His education was quite limited, though, he was called a good teacher for little children.

I next went to a Geography school three weeks taught by Pugh Floyd at Shallotte Church. Mr. Floyd taught Geography by chanting and singing it. I never studied Geography in any other school, though I studied it very carefully out of school. I next went, I think, about six months to school to Wm. I. Gore at the old neighborhood schoolhouse. His education was very limited, though he learned me a great deal about the Arithmetic. All lthis time when not in school I was laboring on the farm; and also about this time I learned to make barrels, and did some work at the turpentine business. This part of my life is quite uninteresting; and is almost without any other incident that of hard labor. Living in a thinly settled country place, and seeing but few people and fewer places, I knew but little of the world. In the early part of 1853 I left home and went to stay with by brother Samuel Bennett, and work turpentine. I remained there till some time in

the Summer and left, having made about ten dollars per month. I next went to Wm. H. Gore's to cooper for him, made him about 50 barrels, settled up and left him. I now had a little money, and was determined to go to school. Re. James H. Brent assisted by Rev. Wm. M.D. Moore was in an Academy in Smithville, Brunswick County, N.C. and without any one to advise me I selected as the school to which I would go.

After staying at home a few days I gathered up my few books and clothing and went down to Little River, S.C. and secured a passage to Wilmington on board the schooner Champion commanded by Capt. Jacob Chadwick. I had never been to sea in my life; so I was about to experience something new besides the honor of being admitted a student in the Academy, a distinction which I dually prized. We crossed Little River bar on a Friday evening, arrived at Smithville that night, and reached Wilmington about 2 P.M. on Saturday. That was July 30, 1953, and I still have some things that I purchased that day.

I remained in Wilmington till Monday the 1st of August, the day on which the academic session commenced in Smithville. I then took the steamboat down to Smithville, went to my boarding house, and prepared my self to commence school the next day.

#### **Unknown Vessel, lost in 1526**

The first documented vessel known to have been lost on the lower Cape Fear River was an unknown ship that ran aground in 1526 at the mouth of the river. In that year Spaniard Lucas Vaquez de Ayllon, a judge on the appeals court at Santo Domingo. Presently the capital of the Dominican Republic, outfitted six vessels at Santo Domingo with the intention of establishing a settlement on the North American mainland. The six ships were Ayllon's flagship; a merchant ship named *La Bretona*; another merchant ship, named the *Santa Catalina*; a third merchant vessel, called *La Chorruca*; a brigantine; and a "patax" or lighter vessel. While attempting to cross the bar into the Cape Fear River (which Ayllon named the "River Jordan"), one of the vessels grounded and was lost. Ayllon's expedition remained in the vicinity long enough to build

another ship, possible the first to be built by Europeans on the North American continent below Canada. The expedition failed in its attempt to establish a permanent settlement in the Cape Fear vicinity.

Furthermore, historical documentation indicates that 191 ships have been lost along the lower Cape Fear River and Northeast Cape Fear. Currently there are 92 known wreck sites, although many do not correspond with the historical accounts. This comparison would suggest that a number of vessels either lost or abandoned along the river are not accounted for in the historical record, and as such the record may represent an underestimate of the actual number of vessels wrecked within the lower Cape Fear area. Those vessels lost are distributed as follows: 171 have been lost on the Cape Fear River, 68 at the main entrance to the river, 45 at New Inlet, and 7 on the lower portion of the Northeast Cape Fear River near Wilmington.

A wide variety of both sailing and steamships are included in the historical accounts of vessel losses. Of the 291 vessels documented in the historical record the greatest number of losses are steamers and schooner. From the overall popularity and quantity of those vessel types, it is not surprising that their numbers exceed other types.

The distribution of vessel losses cluster at three localities-Wilmington waterfront, New Inlet and the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Ship losses at the latter two localities can be attributed primarily

to the high number of vessels that concentrate at those narrow ocean entrances into the river. The vicinity of Wilmington, situated at the confluence of two major waterways, is an area in which the longest continuous period of concentrated maritime activity along the lower Cape Fear River occurred. Also contributing to the high number of losses associated with the development of the Wilmington area are ships that have been destroyed at or near their wharfs from collisions, fire, or other accidents. The uninhabited Eagles Island shoreline, across from Wilmington, also served as an area for the abandonment of old or obsolete vessels.

Source: "A maritime history and survey of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear rivers..." by Claude V. Jackson, III

### Roach-Lancaster Cemetery

The Roach-Lancaster Cemetery located in Varnamtown was given an annual cleaning on November 28, 2014. The maintenance crew put together by David Holden included David Holden, Ennis Swain, David Lewis, Craig Holden, Scott Holden and Ryan Duffy.

The day was spent trimming grass, removing limbs that were overhanging the fence, repairing the fence, and improving the access road.

**HAPPY VALENTINES DAY**

### *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