



# NEWSLETTER

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

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**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 & 2015 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

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

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on November 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 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).

## DUES

With the year coming to a close your 2016 *BCHS* dues will be payable January 1. Individual dues are still \$15.00 per year or \$150.00 for lifetime membership. See any officer or mail check to Brunswick County Historical Society, PO Box 874, Shallotte, NC 28459. Use the membership application found on page 7 for contact changes. Pass along to your friends or relatives. Help us to increase our membership during the next year.

## NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Mr. John Golden, an area folk singer and storyteller will be the guest speaker for our November meeting.

## BCHS OFFICERS ELECTION

The nominating committee will present the slate of officer nominees for the upcoming 2016 and 2017 years. Voting by the membership will take place during the November meeting. Make your plans to attend this important meeting and to cast your vote for our leadership.

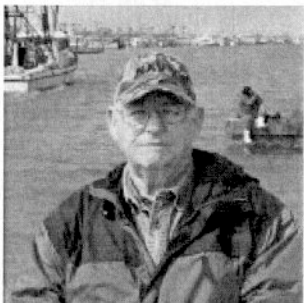
## Leaving Brunswick County

*Editors Note: Continuation from February 2015 article on families 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.

**Oral History: Our River Watermelon Patch, Federal Point-1946-1956.**



Howard Hewett (2014)

by: **Howard Hewett** – Submitted September 13, 2014

Our daughter Georgianne called today on the way home for our 4th of July celebration to ask what method is the best to determine watermelon ripeness. She was stopping in Hempstead, TX (Texas Watermelon Capital) to pick up a melon for our 2009 celebration. Her dilemma was which ripeness checking method should be employed. She asked if she should use the Thump Method or the Broom Straw Method. Now, I am not quite sure what the Broom Straw method is, so I directed her to use the “Thump It Method”.

This discussion brought back a flood of memories of Dad’s watermelon patch over on our river farm at Federal Point. In North Carolina, cool spring weather delays the planting of watermelons so it was usually the first of July before our watermelons were ready for the harvest. Dad called his watermelons Georgia Rattlesnakes.



1951 Howard Hewett – 12 yrs – Georgia Rattlesnake Watermelon grown on Hewett patch in Federal Point

### *Georgia Rattlesnake Watermelons*

In doing a little research, I found that there was a type of watermelon grown in Eastern United States starting around 1870 that was named Georgia Rattlesnake. I would not be surprised if some of Dad’s seeds were passed along through the hands of the

Hewett- Lewis family using the same method that Dad used.

At the time of planting, a mound (hill) was created to plant the seeds. A typical planting was three seeds per hill along with a little fertilizer. As the plants grew, only the healthy plants were allowed to remain in the hill. Planting was spread out over several weeks so all the watermelons would not ripen at the same time.

As the watermelons developed, Dad started taking notes on the growth of some of the melons in the patch. The largest and best shaped melons were singled out by Dad placing an "X" on the topside with his fingernail. As these melons continue to develop, he would place a second "X" and so on. A three "X" watermelon was a very special watermelon. By selection, the seeds from the three "X" watermelons were used for the next season's planting.

Normally, XXX melons were not sold, but served to family and friends. The rule when eating a XXX melon was no seeds went on the ground. Dad collected all the mature seeds. They would be washed and dried on a screen. The seeds would end up in a Mason jar and stored for the next year's planting.

It is interesting that not all one X melons made it to two Xs or two Xs to three Xs. Dad's marks were based on potential. During the growing season some would not meet his expectations and would be sold for a lesser value.

The size of the patch was around four to five acres. It is probably evident to the reader that the size of our watermelon patch produced a lot of melons and there were always enough melons for the family, along with some to be sold commercially.

We sold some in front of our home in a stand. My brother Thomas and I would alternate watching the stand while one of us would put one watermelon in a wagon and haul it up to the beach and sell door-to-door. We worked the beach from the Fort Fisher gates to the light at Kure Beach.



1951 (l-r) Thomas Hewett (7) – Wayne Hewett Bell (5) – Jackie Hewett (3) – Alex Hewett Bell (8) – Photo by: Howard Hewett using a Brownie Camera

We actually had regular customers who would purchase one melon a week but sometimes more while they were available. Dad's watermelons had dark and light green alternating stripes. Maybe that is how they got their name. Most of the larger melons weighed 35-45 pounds. The large two "X" ones sold for \$5.00.

We would make a sale and go back a get another one. My brother and I would make five to six trips a day until we had cleared all the melons out. When our inventory became low, we would pick again. A lull between picking allowed a little break for us to swim and fish.

Now anyone who has operated a watermelon patch or had first hand knowledge what an enticement a watermelon patch can have on a bunch of young boys with a lot of time on their hands. On occasion, we had visitors at night. In most cases, their little foray into the night failed. All roads leading in or out of the river farm were inhabited by our relatives, the Lewises and the Davises. So the whole family was a large security force for the patch. During watermelon season, the Kure Beach

police would come to the rescue when called. Once the intruders were sent on their way, Dad would reward the police with a large watermelon the next day.

My sister Jackie is holding a custom watermelon knife in the photograph above. It is still a family heirloom and will be passed on to future generations for the traditional watermelon cutting on the 4th of July.

*Editor: Part 2: After Howard Hewett submitted the Watermelon Patch article, we followed up with a series of clarifying questions. Howard's detailed responses provide an interesting history about the Hewett family in Federal Point during the 30's - 50's.*

*What was your family relationship to the others in pictures?*

Wayne Hewett Bell and Alex Hewett Bell are my first cousins. The Hewett Bells are my dad's sister's boys. I was the photographer with my Brownie Hawkeye camera.

*Was the Watermelon patch a Hewett enterprise or a Lewis / Hewett / Davis enterprise?*

The watermelon patch was a Hewett enterprise.

*Was the 4-5 acre patch located on the Hewett property?*

Yes, we owned land from the Atlantic to the Cape Fear River.

*What was the acreage of Hewett property?*

That's something about which I have not given a lot of thought....it was about 100-125 yards wide and about one mile from the Atlantic to the Cape Fear River.

Let's see: 125 yards x 3 = 375 ft. (1 mile in ft.= 5280 ft.) 5280 x 375 = 1,980,000 sq. ft. (43,560 sq.ft. in an acre) so 1,980,000 divide by 43,560 = 45.45 acres.

The property was purchased by my Grandfather Albert Walker Hewett. (1879-1935)

The Lewis property ran from the Fort Fisher gate to the side of ours and was basically the same size as the Hewett property. It was purchased by my Great-Grandfather William Lewis (1861-1903).

John Davis' property was on the Kure Beach side of us, but he purchased more land. He had land on both sides of Davis Road. Growing up we did not call it Davis Road; it was just the road to Uncle John & Aunt Becky's house. Aunt Becky Hewett Davis was my Grandfather's sister. John and his son, Lee Otha Davis farmed also.

Foot note: William Edward Lewis and his brother James Harker Lewis drowned (1903) during a sudden storm as they were bringing the family's livestock to Federal Point onboard a Sharpie schooner from Shallotte inlet through southern outer shoals of the Cape Fear River. They are buried in an unmarked grave in Southport, NC.

*Did you have older brothers or sisters to help with the work?*

No. I was the oldest. Tom & Jackie were too young to work the farm during period of story.

*Did your dad (besides working at Ethyl Dow) do all or most of the tending to the patch?*

My Grandfather, Albert Walker Hewett operated the farm until his death in 1935. My dad, Howard Curtis Hewett, worked the farm growing up. Dad was 21 when his father died so he continued to take care of the farm.

The Hewetts & Lewises moved from Lockwood Folly Township (Boone's Neck, near the Shallotte Inlet) Brunswick County, NC to Federal Point between the years of 1900-1903.

The Hewetts moved to North Carolina in 1752 from Cape May, NJ. The family made their living as whalers. In North Carolina they continued fishing, but warmer weather was more conducive to farming. The Hewett family owned a sizable

amount of land in Brunswick County. One of the Hewett daughters married a man whose last name was Holden. Land changed hands... thus, Holden Beach ... I do not know if this change of hands was due to dollars or a wedding dowry.

The patriarch of our family in North Carolina was Joseph Hewett (1700-1795). He had eleven children and five brothers, so the number of Hewetts in Brunswick Co. grew exponentially over the years. I am a direct descendant of Joseph. When I say we owned land, I am speaking collectively as a part of the Hewett clan.

The time period of the story is mostly Dad's operation. We grew corn, strawberries, red potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions and pole beans. When Grandfather Albert Walker was living, he provided vegetables for Grandfather Roebuck's Grocery Store in Wilmington. Albert's spring pole beans were the first to market because of the location of the farm on the river. The Castle Hayne farms north of Wilmington were several weeks later because of their northern location.

The family garden was at my Grandmother's. One of my remembrance stories that I have in draft form is our life and how we provided a living on Federal Point. I certainly was working on the river farm at a young age, discing land & tilling after school and always working on Saturday. The "Do Gooders" would be up in arms today if they saw an eight-year-old on an open-wheeled tractor pulling a disc.

## Brunswick Ferry

*Editors Note: Very little information is available dealing with early ferries, and what is available is sketchy at best.*

*Reference to ferries can be found in colonial court records as the ferriage fee was regulated by the court. However, these references only mention who ran the ferry and what he could charge. No exact location is mentioned but by combining these court records with early maps, one can obtain a generalized location. Also from these early*

*maps we can get a feel of the complementary role that early ferries played in the colonial system of roads.*

*The 1769 court entry is the last mention of the Brunswick Ferry.*

### Brunswick Ferry

The first authorized ferry on the lower Cape Fear River was established in 1727 from the town of Brunswick on the western shore to the "upper haul over" on the eastern shore, where small craft were transported overland from the river to the ocean. The Brunswick ferry was sometimes referred to as the "Ferry to the landing at Big Sugar Loaf".

On June 3, 1725, Maurice Moore was granted 1,500 acres of land on the west side of the Cape Fear River. Of this tract, 320 acres were set aside and a portion divided in half-acre lots to be developed as the town of Brunswick. From the time of its founding until the American Revolution, the town served as a political, social, and commercial center of the lower Cape Fear region. To facilitate travel between the ocean and the interior of Brunswick County, the general court met at Edenton on March 27, 1727, and determined that a ferry was needed over the Cape Fear River. The general court authorized Cornelius Harnett Sr. to keep a ferry "from the place designed as a Town on the West side of the River (Brunswick Town) to a place called Haulover, and that he receive the Sum of five shillings for a man and horse and a half Crown for each person". Harnett purchased in June 1726 from Col. Maurice Moore two lots, Nos. 22 and 23, within the town of Brunswick for 2 pounds each. Those lots, located in the southern portion of the town near the river, were to be improved within eight months by the construction of two habitable houses not less than 16 feet by 20 feet in size. It was from this location that Harnett operated the ferry across the river to the haulover near Sugar Loaf.

About 1725, in addition to the site of Brunswick Town and adjacent areas, Col. Maurice Moore also acquired by grant extensive landholdings on the opposite or eastern side of the Cape Fear River. Moore's seaside property comprised of 2,640 acres

that extended from Landgrave Thomas Smith's land northward along the barrier beach and sounds approximately 12 miles to a point just below the present Masonboro Inlet. On April 21, 1736, Colonel Moore sold to Col. Thomas Merrick for 500 pounds the large tract of land that became known as the Haulover plantation and a portion of the property to John Porter. Merrick called the plantation "Hall Over" in a security bond issued to Richard Moorescroft six days later. While Merrick was probably a longtime resident at the plantation, and subsequently appointed keeper of the ferry, there is no indication that Moorescroft ever resided at the Haulover. Perhaps Moorescroft simply held the land in trust for Merrick, inasmuch as Merrick's heirs owned the property a few years later.

The Moseley map (1735) shows the eastern ferry landing located just below the mouth of a stream that much later came to be known as Telfairs Creek. This ferry to the landing at Big Sugar Loaf on the opposite side of the river, a distance of more than 2 miles, connected with the only road to the northern part of the province. Surviving records indicate that Cornelius Harnett Sr. surrendered the operation of the Brunswick Ferry in the mid-1730s, possible as early as 1733. His successor was the mariner Capt. Edward Scott, who purchased lot 29 at Brunswick Town from Nathaniel Moore during that year for 700 pounds. Scott's employment as a ferry keeper apparently lasted only a few years, for in March 1738 the New Hanover County Court accepted his resignation. On June 13, 1738, the court appointed Thomas Merrick "to take the Brunswick Ferry" after the resignation of Scott. Merrick operated the ferry until September 1740, when the court also accepted "the resignation of Col. Merrick as the Ferry Keeper at Brunswick Town ordered to become effective within a month after this Court," provided it could find a proper person to keep the ferry.

On June 12, 1741, permission to operate the Brunswick ferry was granted by the court to Roger Moore, who undoubtedly employed others for at least two years to carry out the actual duties involved. From 1743 until at least 1748 John Maulsby operated the ferry. Maulsby came to the lower Cape Fear in the late 1730s from Pennsylvania, where he had previously operated a river ferry.

He purchased a 320-acre tract of land on the east side of the river just upstream and across from Brunswick Town. By 1761 a new tender, Darby Egan, had commenced operation of both an ordinary and the Brunswick ferry. In September 1760 the court ordered all ferry keepers in New Hanover County to maintain at least two boats to each ferry. By 1765 Darby Egan had evidently remained at his ordinary in Brunswick Town, while his wife Elizabeth stationed herself on the opposite shore for the convenience of travelers. For the next four years Darby Egan maintained the Brunswick ferry and continued to operate his ordinary. He then sought to improve his fortunes by assuming responsibility for ferry service in the larger and more prosperous town of Wilmington. On October 6, 1769, the New Hanover County Court denied Egan "the keeper of the ferry over to Brunswick Town any longer, because he had engaged himself at the Wilmington ferry".

The Brunswick ferry remained in operation with a new keeper until at least 1775 and it is highly probable that it continued to operate until early in 1776. By the end of March of that year, however, British warships present in the lower reaches of the Cape Fear River, along with well-armed troops placed ashore, carried out sporadic raids against Brunswick Town and the surrounding countryside. It was probable during these early months of 1776 that the inhabitants of Brunswick Town permanently abandoned the town. It is also probable that the Brunswick ferry was forever discontinued during that period.

*Source: "A Maritime History and Survey of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear Rivers, Wilmington Harbor, North Carolina." Volume I Maritime History, by Claude V. Jackson III*

### **To War and Back**

Thomas Hickman lived near Calabash in Brunswick County and enlisted in the Confederate army along with his neighbors and several relatives, including his brother, Henry.

Lt. Hickman survived the Fort Fisher battle and imprisonment. He was paroled on March 5, 1865.

He walked home from New York after several

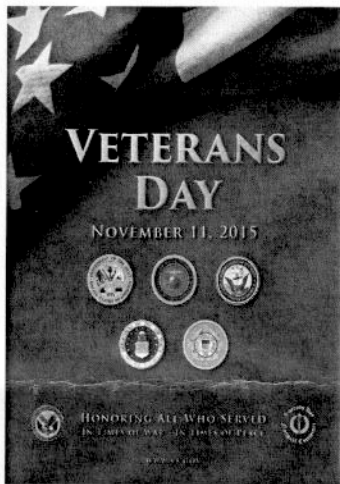
nants of farm crops found in the fields. He arrived home at Hickman's Crossroads in rags, so his mother made him a new suit of clothes from thread and material that she spun and wove herself.

After the war Thomas was a farmer and a fisherman.

Source: North Carolina Civil War History Center.

## Thank You Veterans

Veterans Day is a public holiday that is dedicated to honoring anyone who has served in the United



States military. The holiday began as a day to remember the end of World War I and was declared a holiday by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919. Originally known as Armistice Day, the holiday became Veterans Day in 1954.

When Woodrow Wilson declared 11 November a holiday the primary intention was to have a day to reflect on the sacrifices of those who had served in the military during World War I. Observation of the holiday through parades and meetings was envisioned.

Today many Americans observe the day by attending ceremonies and parades that are dedicated to honoring the troops for their service. These often allow veterans to speak about their time in the service and give Americans the opportunity to personally thank veterans for their sacrifice.

## Old BCCHS Newsletters

BCCHS Newsletters (1961-2005) are now available for viewing on the Susie Carson Research Room website. <https://sites.google.com/site/researchsouthporthistory/home>.

## Area Events

Nov. 20-21, 2015: Moores Creek Nation Battlefield "**Candlelight Tours**". Tours will begin outside of Patriots Hall at 6:00 pm and will depart from there every 15 minutes with the last tour departing at 8:15 pm. Reservations required. Contact the visitor center at 910-283-5591 ex. 2234.

Dec. 13, 2015: Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site, "**An 18th Century Christmas**". Time, 1:00 pm-5:30 pm. Call the Visitor Center at 910-371-6613 for additional information.

Dec. 3-13, 2015: "**Southport Winterfest**". Activities at various locations around Southport. Contact the Southport Visitors Center for more information: 910-457-7927.

### *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