



# 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 2016 & 2017 Term**

President: Richard Hollembeak  
Vice-President: Sally Robinson  
Secretary: Roberta Brady  
Treasurer: Bob Armour  
Directors: James Robinson  
Jim Marlowe  
Dave Lewis

Newsletter Editor: Dave Lewis

## BCHS Website

www.bchs1764.org  
Webmaster: Jimmy Green

## MAY MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC

**May 9, 2016 7:30 P.M.**

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, May 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 2016 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* began the 57th Volume. Volume I, Number 1 was printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletter from September 1961 to February 2016 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** 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 Roberta Brady or bring check or cash to the May meeting. Use the membership application found on page seven for contact changes. Make checks payable to the **Brunswick County Historical Society**.

## Guest Speaker

Mr. Bernhard Thuersam will be our quest speaker at the May meeting. He is the Executive Director and Editor of the Cape Fear Historical Institute in Wilmington. He is noted as one of the most knowledgeable historians of antebellum and War Between the States, researcher, writer re-enactor and architectural historian. His program is titled "From Fort Fisher to Duplin Roads: Gen. Robert F. Hoke's Campaign". He will also discuss the men from surrounding counties who served as Fort Fisher's garrison.

## NEW BCHS OFFICERS

The slate of new officers for the BCHS is now complete. Richard Hollembeak and Sally Robinson were nominated, voted on, and approved at the February meeting. Richard is the new President and Sally is our new Vice-President. The full list of officers for the 2016 and 2017 term can be found on page one.

## THE GULLAH GEECHEE CORRIDOR

The Corridor represents a significant story of local, regional, national, and even global importance. The Corridor encompasses a cultural and linguistic area along the southeastern coast of the United States from the northern border of Pender County, North Carolina to the southern border of St. Johns County, Florida and thirty miles inland. This area, including Brunswick County, is home to one of the country's most unique cultures, a tradition first shaped by enslaved Africans brought to the southeastern United States from the primarily rice producing regions of West and Central Africa.



The Gullah people are direct descendants of Africans brought to the United States and enslaved for generations working on the many rice plantations within the Corridor. The proverbial focal point of

the Gullah people resides in the Lowcountry region of South Carolina. Specifically, Beaufort, Charleston, Berkeley, Georgetown and Horry Counties are often thought of as the home of the Gullah Culture. Their diverse roots in particular parts of Africa, primarily West Africa, and the nature of their enslavement on isolated islands created a unique culture that survives to the present day. Evidence of the culture is clearly visible in the distinctive arts, crafts, cuisine, and music, as well as Gullah Geechee language. The culture is embodied in diverse patterns of social organization reflecting the intimate and private ways communities and families meet the challenges of life.

Gullah people are also known as “Geechee” people and the words can be used interchangeably. The names “Gullah” and “Geechee” are thought to be drawn from two of the main tribes brought over during the slave trade: the Gola tribe from the Angola region and the Gizzi tribe from the Liberia region. Through time, these two tribe names evolved into their present day forms. “Gullah” is the more popular than the word “Geechee”.

In 1700 the first West African slaves came to the South Carolina coast. Their jobs consisted of growing the three cash crops for plantations along the coastal area: rice, indigo, and cotton. Their welcome to the United States was not a warm one at first. Because these slaves differed in originating geographic regions, they were unable to communicate with each other in the beginning of plantation days. Soon enough they began to use an auxiliary language of African dialects to accomplish all the plantation work. This auxiliary language combined with English making it easier for this fusion of West Africans to share and express their experiences and varying cultures.

The culture is manifested in a system of practices and principles that emerge from: (1) the diverse African origins of Gullah people, (2) intense interaction among people from different language groups, and (3) generations of isolation in settings where enslaved Africans and their descendants were the majority population. The isolation continued after the Civil War ended in 1865. A hostile society led Gullah communities to remain unto themselves for almost another century. Customs,

traditions, and beliefs continued to develop, often in opposition to segregation and oppression from the dominant society.

After the Emancipation Proclamation took effect in 1865, many slaves bought land next to each other and established close-knit communities. Once established these slaves rarely ventured far outside these communities. During this period of isolation, the Gullah culture was born. These people were now living together in community, reinforcing their sense of African descent. Their auxiliary language began to take hold of the residents, further mixing English and West African dialects, traditions, and ways of life.

Today Gullah people are known for their history as slaves and their unique crafts and icons. The most known craft is inarguably the sweetgrass basket. Sweetgrass baskets are made from sweetgrass plants found along the beaches of the southeast. In the Lowcountry of South Carolina, it is not uncommon to see stands selling these baskets alongside major highways. They are also famous for their other arts modeled from Africa, including earthenware pottery called "Colono Ware", wood carvings, beadwork, and story quilts. Story quilts are especially meaningful because they communicate affection and celebrate family history; it is a reminder of the powerful ties of kinship. They are a historical record. Another famous icon is the Gullah language. Through the continual use of English and West African dialects, the Gullah people developed from a pidgin language to a more developed, Creole language. Comparatively Gullah language sounds much like Haitian Creole in both spelling and harmonics. The dialect is now recognized as a distinct language such that the American Bible Society has even published a Bible in the Sea Island Creole. Another well known Gullah icon is their unique folklore. Food is also a very famous aspect of the Gullah culture. These West African slaves brought with them some of the most basic cooking ingredients to the United States. Foods like okra, watermelon, and peanuts are a few among the many foods they transplanted here in the Southeast. Religion also plays a large part in these people's lives. Gullah religion is a mix of Christianity with a few attributes from West African religions. They believe in God, seeing them-

selves as the Israelites brought into slavery and awaiting their "Moses" to deliver them. They also heavily identify with Jesus, whose suffering on the cross is seen much like their suffering in slavery. Yet much of the West African influence on religion comes from hexes, herbal remedies, superstitions, and the perceived magic of root doctors. Both Christian and West African aspects are combined into worship, rituals, and sacrifices designed to invoke God, the surrounding spirits, or even long forgotten ancestors.

While the roots of Gullah people were rough upon arriving in the United States, many of those who know of the Gullah people assume that their lifestyle is fairly prosperous. However, this view of Gullah individuals does not represent the vast majority of Gullah socioeconomic level. The truth is Gullah people are a people confined in deep poverty. Not necessarily in the sense of 19<sup>th</sup> century enslavement, but a poverty of low socioeconomic status that has carried passed the Emancipation Proclamation to the present day.

Since the 1930s, the isolation which kept the Gullah communities together has disappeared, largely due to the interference of the outside world. Most modern roads along the coast were built during this time allowing corporations to come and eye the Gullah lands. Developers began to threaten the delicate environment and historic way this unique group has lived since the fall of the Confederacy. When tax values on beach-front properties became too high for Gullah people to pay them, corporations paid the money owed, bought the tracts, and forced all of the Gullah people off their traditional lands. Development swept across the Corridor turning forest and marsh into private resorts and golf courses. The sweetgrass has been killed by pesticides and herbicides from the surrounding development. So not only are they unable to have a home, Gullah people are unable to practice their art.

Areas of importance to the Gullah community in the Brunswick County region are the rice plantations along the Cape Fear River, Eagles Island, and Poplar Grove plantation in Pender County. According to Dr. John Haley, Professor Emeritus University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the Gullah Geechee culture is a lot like Eagles Island: over-

looked by many in Southeastern North Carolina. Dr. Haley says that “almost everything that was important to the development of the Cape Fear region plays in Eagles Island”.

The development started when rice planters and their Gullah slaves came to the Cape Fear region from Goose Creek, South Carolina. Before they came, Haley said, the area was known as no-man’s land. Once Goose Creek planters and their slaves settled here, Eagles Island became a key part of their rice growing operation. It was also a place to store forestry products, like turpentine, tar and pitch that were being sold in North Carolina; but when the Civil War started, Gullah culture fell off the map. Since Gullah people weren’t willing to talk about what happened to them during or after the war, their society was pushed behind the scenes, and much of the land they’d helped develop was used for other purposes, Haley said. Eagles Island is one of the only Gullah land sites in North Carolina that hasn’t been developed into golf courses and country clubs.

Poplar Grove Plantation, just north of Wilmington on highway 17, provides an opportunity to explore local and regional Gullah Geechee history as it relates to the Foy family. Foy family slaves once engaged in agricultural practices including the cultivation of peanuts, sweet potatoes, and melons, and the heritage arts such as basket-making, weaving, and blacksmithing reflected the traditions of a diverse slave community in southeastern North Carolina.

Through the efforts of the National Park Service to establish this Corridor, “the Gullah Geechee story represents a crucial component of local, regional, and national history. Preserving and interpreting Gullah Geechee culture and its associated sites is significant to people of all racial, regional, and ethnic backgrounds and is vital to telling the story of the American heritage”.

*Source: The Gullah People and Their Poverty, by Hillary Taylor, Furman University.  
Star News, September 12, 2012, by Pressley Baird  
Poplar Grove Plantation, poplargrove.org*

## State of North Carolina

## Pat McCrory GOVERNOR GULLAH GEECHEE AWARENESS MONTH 2014

By the Governor of the State of North Carolina  
A Proclamation

**Whereas**, the Gullah Geechee Culture Heritage Corridor was established by federal legislation in 2006 to recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by African Americans, known as Gullah Geechee, who settled in the coastal counties of South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina and Florida, and

**Whereas**, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission determined that coastal communities as far north as Pender County in the State of North Carolina possess strong historical and cultural ties to Gullah Geechee history and culture; and

**Whereas**, the Gullah Geechee Culture Heritage Corridor Commission proposed in the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan that the boundary of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor be defined to include Pender County, North Carolina, which was not included in the boundary defined in the designating legislation; and

**Whereas**, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is the only National Heritage Area that promotes the living history of an African American population; and the Alliance of National Heritage Areas is established through the National Park Service to encourage heritage development in the areas of natural resource conservation, historic preservation, community revitalization, economic development, recreation enhancement, the arts, folk life, education and interpretation; and

**Whereas**, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan was approved by the Office of the United States Secretary of the Interior on May 6, 2013, and the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission implementation tiers of Education, Documentation and Preservation, and Economic Development; and

**Whereas**, Gullah Geechee culture is a benefit to heritage tourism within the State of North Carolina, particularly in Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover and Pender Counties;

**Now, Therefore**, I, Pat McCrory, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim October

2014, as “GULLAH GEECHEE AWARENESS MONTH” in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this sixteenth day of July in the year of our Lord two thousand and fourteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-ninth.

Signed: **Pat McCrory**  
Governor

### **Clarendon Plantation**

Clarendon Plantation in Brunswick County is located five miles south of Belville along highway 133. Clarendon was one of almost 30 plantations along the Cape Fear River where “Carolina Gold” rice was once cultivated. Today, this plantation features extensive forest, bluffs along the river, expansive marshes and is recognized for its wild-life, water quality and forest resources. In 2008 the owners placed a 400-acre tract under a water quality landowner agreement, and a second 325-acre tract under a working forest landowner agreement. The agreements mean that while the property will remain in private hands, its management will protect natural resources that benefit the public.

Clarendon was named after Clarendon County which originally extended from Albemarle on the north to Saint Augustine, Florida on the south. In addition to producing rice, cotton and tobacco were also raised on Clarendon’s 1000 acres of rich farm land. “Carolina Gold” was a rich strain of rice that was especially prized in the 1700’s and 1800’s.

John Gage (Grange) accepted the original land grant for the plantation in 1728, although the area was inhabited long before that. Clarendon is the home of a distinctive English brick building that was indentified as “the smoke house and/or power magazine”. This old square building is believed to be late seventeenth century because of the brick corner bonds and the pantile roof are the same architectural styles used at both Williamsburg, Virginia and Charleston, South Carolina.

From 1662 to 1665 a group of English settlers from the Caribbean Island of Barbados, led by Sir John Yeamans, attempted to establish a colony called “Charles-Towne” in the vicinity of Clarendon. The settlement was abandoned in 1667 and many believe this brick structure was built by the settlers around 1666. If true, it could be the oldest brick building in North Carolina.

Clarendon Plantation had numerous owners through the years. Before the American Revolution it was owned by John Ancrum and William Dry. After the Revolution the first Governor of North Carolina, Benjamin Smith, came into possession of Clarendon Plantation. James Carson and then John Poisson owned it for a while before Marsden Campbell acquired the plantation in 1805. Later, in 1834 the site was purchased by the Watters family who built a two-story, antebellum house. This manor house was destroyed by fire in 1974. An advertisement in an 1834 issue of the People’s Press and Wilmington Advertiser described the plantation as consisting of 325 acres of tidal swamp, 654 acres of upland, with 229 acres in “a high state of cultivation”. The advertiser claimed the property could yield 79 bushels of rice per acre. Accommodations were available for one hundred slaves along with a “comfortable” overseer’s house and a grist mill.

In the early twentieth century D. H. Lippitt gained control of the plantation and built the present day home site in 1923-1924. Shortly before World War II Clarendon was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Thomas of Charlotte. They later began opening the property to visitors during the Azaleas Festivals. It is here in 1944 that author, Inglis Fletcher wrote her historical novel “Lusty Wind for Carolina”.

Bordering the plantation along the Cape Fear River can be found one of the most interesting and intriguing time telling devices in America. Native Americans dug a 50 foot wide canal and oriented it so perfectly that the Summer Solstice sunrise ascends dead center in the canal, thus telling the Indians that the sun would then start moving southward and providing them with the first calendar of the lower Cape Fear region. There is also an unidentified avenue of ruins and live oak trees which leads to an old Indian field where many different pieces

of Indian pottery have been found. Presently Clarendon is closed to the public.

## **The Importance of Rice to North Carolina**

By Keri Towery

Rice was a very profitable crop in the late 1600s. People in foreign lands were already familiar with it, and it was gaining popularity as a food for the growing slave trade. The problem was it would grow only in certain areas under certain conditions.

### **Carolina had those areas and conditions**

Rice production helped support North Carolina's early economy for many years. African people had to clear, design, and build the rice fields before they could start laboring to grow the crop. Successful rice fields often started out as cypress swamps or tidal marshes. The people of "Guinea" also contributed many other plants, foods, and ideas.

By the 1690s, planters who had settled in the southern parts of the Carolina colony (present-day South Carolina) found they had the right climate and geography for growing rice. Some of these planters then decided to make rice their major agricultural crop; but few of them, if any, knew anything about raising rice. They needed people who did know. So, they purchased enslaved persons directly from West Africa, where the natives had been raising rice for several hundred years.

These African natives knew how to prepare fields and how to grow, harvest, and use rice. The planters who purchased these people hoped their new slaves could also grow the crop in the New World. Indeed, by the 1720s rice had become South Carolina's most profitable export, and before long, South Carolina planters started moving northward to the swampy shores of the lower Cape Fear River valley in North Carolina.

In spite of the large amounts of money needed to transform swamplands into rice fields, North Carolina's rice crops also became very profitable. These profits, in fact, grew to be second only to the area's

plentiful harvests of naval stores — tar, pitch, and turpentine.

## **The rise of rice in North Carolina**

Rice production was very difficult work and required a large number of field slaves as well as several enslaved experts. Rice planters relied on these experts to have the knowledge and skills necessary for building the fields, planting the crops, flooding and draining the fields, watching the crops, and finally harvesting, threshing, and preparing the rice for sale.

Field slaves had the most difficult jobs on the plantation since most of the work they performed took place in snake and insect-infested swamps. Injuries and disease were all too common. Their work started with clearing the land. They then had to dig extensive systems of canals, ditches, levees, and dams that would control water to flood and drain the fields. Only after all this work was completed could the annual process of growing and harvesting rice begin.

In late March and during April, field slaves began to sow rice seed in rows that were about fifteen feet apart so they would have room to walk between the growing plants. The fields were then flooded for about a week so that the seeds could sprout. The fields were then drained. During the rest of the growing season, the fields were flooded and drained many times. The rice was harvested in September. It was threshed, polished, and sold during the fall and winter months.

### **Its fall came quickly**

The emancipation of slaves in the United States was the beginning of the end for the rice plantations of North Carolina. Without the cheap labor of enslaved workers, rice would have become a very expensive crop. Growers in the state no longer had the money to raise it.

As technologies changed and made planting and harvesting rice easier and cheaper, some later attempts were made to revive the industry; but competition from established rice growers in Louisiana

and other states in the deep south caused those efforts to fail.

The final end to large-scale commercial rice production in North Carolina came in the late 1800s when a series of large hurricanes damaged the old rice fields beyond repair. The state's growers gave up. That ended not only one of North Carolina's oldest farming traditions but also one of the largest African contributions to North Carolina agriculture.

Source: North Carolina Museum of History.

### **Buchoi Plantation**

On the west side of the Cape Fear River just southwest of Belville can be found a rice plantation known as Buchoi. Originally occupied by Justice Alfred Moore this was a working plantation between the years of 1776-1903. Buchoi lying about four miles from Wilmington contained 200 acres of tide swamp of which 140 acres were under cultivation. It also consisted of 640 acres of upland. The tomb of Justice Moore still stands on Buchoi although his remains were removed to St. Phillip's Church graveyard at Old Brunswick.

UNC Wilmington will begin an excavation on May 16, 2016, of this historic rice plantation. They will be performing a survey, location, excavation and evaluation of Buchoi. This will be the first rice

plantation to be excavated in the coastal Cape Fear region.

### **There's No Refuge in Wartime**

Lawrence L. Lancaster moved from Craven County to the Lockwood Folly region of Brunswick County where he enlisted as a private with Company K, 36th Regiment North Carolina State Troops.

Lawrence was captured defending Fort Fisher on January 15, 1865 and while confined at Point Lookout, Md. he died of typhoid fever and pneumonia on June 5, 1865.

### **Local Events**

**May 10, 2016:** Second Tuesday Talk with Martha Johnson. "The Diary of Mrs Clitherall", 10:30 am at the Harper Library on Moore St., Southport.

**May 30, 2016:** Memorial Day Observance. Gather on the deck of the Battleship US North Carolina to pay respect to our *fallen heroes*. Time, 5:45 pm and the admission is free.

**June 14, 2016:** Second Tuesday Talk with Jason Tyson. "Brunswick County Lost Hero of WWII", 10:30 am at the Harper Library on Moore St., Southport.

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

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

New: \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please submit any articles or information for future newsletters to Dave Lewis.

Email: [davelewis@atmc.net](mailto:davelewis@atmc.net)

### CALENDER OF EVENTS

BCHS Meetings: February 08, 2016  
May 09, 2016  
August 08, 2016  
November 08, 2016

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