



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 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

NOVEMBER MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC NOVEMBER 14, 2016 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, November 14th 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 November 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).

DAVID HARDY from UNC-TV will be our guest speaker in November. David is a native of Kinston, attended UNC-Chapel Hill and was hired by UNC-TV to be on the student crew. After graduation he was hired full-time for UNC-TV and has been a videographer, editor and producer. He produces the Emmy-winning *Our State* program and *North Carolina Weekend*, UNC-TV's most popular local program. His topic will be on the making of the documentary of the *Gause tomb* aired August 1, 2016 on UNC-TV.

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**.

In Memory

Sadly since the August BCHS meeting we lost two of our longtime members. Ouida Hewett passed away on August 12th and Helen Taylor on September 5th. Our thoughts and prayers go out to their families. Their presence and genealogy and local history knowledge will be missed by everyone in Brunswick County.

BOONE'S NECK, OXPEN, and SEASHORE AREA

Editors Note: Thanks to David Holden for gathering the correct information and contributing to this article.

These three communities are close to Holden Beach and form a peninsula from the intersection of Holden Beach Road and Mt. Pisgah Road to the intersection of Holden Beach Road and Seashore Road heading towards Windy Point by way of Seashore Road. Early maps and family history refer to present day Mt. Pisgah Road as "Turn Pike Road".

Many small communities within Brunswick County derive their name from prominent land owners. The Boone's Neck area is no exception and is presumed to have been named after Thomas Boone of South Carolina, who purchased one thousand acres of land from Roger Moore, Esqr. Records indicate that on February 19, 1756 William Boone of Berkley County in the Parish of Christ Church, South Carolina, the son of Thomas Boone, sold this land to Joseph Hewett, Sr. and Henry Leonard, Sr. both of New Hanover County (now Brunswick County). This is found in New Hanover County Deed Book D, page 223 and witnessed by Randol Hewett, Sr., Randol Hewett, Jr. and Samuel Leonard. William Boone was known for his ability to distill salt water for food preservation purposes.

Fast forward to the late 1800's and early 1900's where we find the landholders in the Boone's Neck and Seashore area consisted of the Bellamy, Davis, Fulford, Hewett, Holden, Kirby, Lewis and Robinson families. The Bellamy's landholdings were located in the area near the Shallotte River known as Windy Point. Their holdings consisted of a few

hundred acres for farming and a store. The Hewett's owned a track of land adjacent to the Bellamy property and were boatbuilders by trade in addition to farming and fishing. The Robinson's owned property along Seashore Road, including part of what is now considered Holden Beach. A section west of the now closed Bacon Inlet was called Robinson Beach. The Holden's owned the area now known as Sea Air Estates and land at Windy Point.

There are four known cemeteries in the Boone's Neck area between Seashore Road and the Inland Waterway. The Holden Cemetery is located on Carstens Way in Sea Air Estates; Robinson Cemetery is beside Seashore Road, Bellamy Cemetery is on West Tanglewood Drive; and Isaish Fulford and at least three unknown graves are located on Bowman St. All four cemeteries have graves dating back to the mid 1800's and earlier.

The Oxpen community is located in the area surrounding the intersection of Holden Beach Road and Mt. Pisgah (Turn Pike) Road and continues westward to the upper reaches of Little Shallotte River. Oxpen Road (traditionally called "Old Dam Road") continues southwestward and crosses Bell Branch via the Old Dam Bridge. Oral histories from lifelong residents of this community state that in the late 1800's a commercial node comprised of a country store, grist mill, barber shop, barrel/keg manufacturing shop, open-air butcher shop, and a saw mill were located in the area adjacent to the "Old Dam Bridge". Also located in the vicinity of the Old Dam Bridge was a 700 foot long "foot-bridge" that extended westward across the marsh to neighboring communities.

How the Oxpen community received its name is not clearly known at this time; however, it has been suggested that there was once a trading post along the Shallotte River near this community where merchants and farmers would "pen" their livestock (e.g. oxen) for sale or trade. Overtime, this trading post became know as "Oxpen". Also recognizable to this area was what many referred to as "the eagle's nest". This nest was located in the top of a large dead pine tree in the vicinity of the "Old Dam Bridge" and may or may not have been an eagle's nest but belonged to some other large bird indige-

nous to the area, such as the Fish Hawk.

It has been suggested that this area was once accessible by shallow draft boats traveling as far as the Old Dam Bridge. Old maps of the region show this may have been true by using the Little Shallotte River and possibly using Bell Swamp, Oxpen Swamp, and Skipper Swamp creeks to reach their destinations.

Brunswick County deed books show landowners in the Oxpen community to be Brown's, Hewett's, Lewis's, Morgan's, Robinson's and others during the late 1800's and early 1900's. Given the long history of Boones Neck and its associated families, it is reasonable to assume that we have much more to learn about this area, its history and families.

Sources: *Unincorporated Communities* prepared by the Brunswick County Planning & Community Development Department.

Signed affidavits: John Daniel Robinson, Robert (RP) Robinson, Viola Hewett, Ouida Hewett, Jesse C. (Billy) Robinson, David Leo Fulford, Sheula Lewis Lott, Shirley Robinson Hewett, Quincy Kirby, and Jo Ann Bellamy Simmons. All signed affidavits recount oral histories as told by their fathers and grandfathers. All contributors also state that Oxpen Road (SR1140) was only known as the "Old Dam Road" during the early years of development.

The Largest Log Building in the South

Submitted by Roberta Maness Brady

The old gym at Waccamaw High School was known as the largest log building in the South. It was believed to have been started being built in 1931/32 and completed in or about 1933. The name of the building then was the "Waccamaw Community Building". It was used for any gathering that the community had need for. The funds for the building came from the Work Project Administration Funds, also known as the "Hoover Funds", as this was in time of the Deep Depression of the 1920's and 30's. The county commissioners at this time were John Jennerett, Levey Swain and Mr.

McLamb (not sure of his first name). They gave money from the county later as the building progressed.

The building was made from large cypress and cedar trees that were cut from the Green swamp in Northern and Western Brunswick County. The workers came from the Civilian Conservation Corps set up by President Hoover. They were brought in by wagons and trucks to the school from camps in the Green Swamp by Juniper Creek and the State Forests Fire tower. Some also came from Pireway in Columbus County.



Waccamaw Log Gym

The logs were cut, peeled and bought out of the swamp on railroad skidders and put on large wagons and hauled to the saw mill on Mill Branch Road, now known as Big Neck Road. The saw mill was known as the "Hoover Mill" and owned by my father, Robert Maness.

Robert Maness, a timber cruiser from Asheboro, NC, was responsible for selecting the timber used in building the gym. At the mill he inspected the logs for length and made sure they were notched on each end to fit together.

Mr. Olean Hughes was the construction superintendent of the building, and things were going along very well until a log fell and broke his leg. He was out of work for a few weeks, but someone built him a makeshift wheelchair so he was back on the job overseeing the construction. The logs were sealed with dobbing made of white sand from the bottom of the Waccamaw River and cement. The

same procedure was used on tobacco barns for many years. The floors were heart pine from very tall pine trees and the boys would shine them before a basketball game. The roof was made from thousands of hand drawn cypress shingles. Seats were made of extra wide cedar boards laid out in the shape of stairs six or seven steps high. Above these seats were windows about every five or six feet to give light during the day.

This gym had two large rooms on each end to be used for various functions. During the first years one room was used as a soup kitchen or the “community canning room” where the ladies would come and can their vegetables and meats. If the children who were in school had a little money, they could buy their lunch for four or five cents, but if they did not, they would bring a jar of food for the cooks, and that would be their payment.

The other room that connected to the soup kitchen was used as the school store selling candy, drinks, paper and pencils. One student told the story of her first Baby Ruth candy bar she had bought for four cents and how large it was. She said it was the best candy she had ever eaten and from then on loved Baby Ruth candy bars.

The opening for the store was a long narrow window with shutters that opened when the store was in operation. The drinks were kept in an ice-filled drink case with a drain that ran to the outside of the building.

On the other end of the gym were two rooms that were used as dressing rooms for the ballplayers and for class-rooms. There were a large number of students who spent one or two years in these class rooms because the main school building was overcrowded. These rooms were heated by big potbelly stoves, and at times the boys would put so much coal in them they would almost get red hot. The teachers would open the windows and some students would climb through the windows when she had her back turned. They would play basketball until caught and then would lose their recess period for a couple of days. This was done by all the students who had classes in these two rooms, and I will always believe that is what helped our school

to keep the basketball championship for many, many years.

During the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s the gym was used as the community voting place and a place for various community meetings. Junior/Senior banquets were held after being beautifully decorated by the students and faculty.

Sadly in 1952 the building was condemned and torn down. Roberta wishes to thank Joe Standland and Hopson Bennett for their contribution to this article.

THE HANDHELD CHURCH FAN

A Vanishing Relic of Southern Americana

The handheld fan has been in use for a long, long time. Four thousand year old drawings in Egypt show elegant ladies with fans, and three thousand year old ceramics from China show men and women using fans. Ancient Greek poets wrote of fans as “scepters of feminine beauty”, and the conquering Romans brought Greek fans back to Rome as objects of great value.

Here in Brunswick County and during the summertime before air conditioning, churches were oppressively hot and without the hand held fans the congregation would have been miserable. Since almost



all churches now have air conditioning, the church fan is quickly becoming a vanishing relic of Southern Americana.

Most of the fans were donated by funeral homes, which advertised their name, address and phone number on the back. Today they have become a highly collectable item to be found in antique stores, flea markets or yard sales and are a reminder of an American way of life that is gone forever. The art and advertisements on these fans only act to resurrect memories of a vanished world,

a warmer world before the cooling breezes of air conditioning.

Fans were also a mode of advertising and there was a time when they were used in homes, court-houses, general stores, beauty parlors, barber shops, tobacco warehouses and almost anywhere people gathered on hot days. Tobacco warehouses, a major supplier, gave fans to farmers to take home with them.

In the south the first fans were made of raffia, rattan, and woven sea grass. Beginning around 1900 they were made of card stock. Today instead of funeral homes and insurance companies sponsoring the fans, you may find car dealers, colleges and even McDonald's. The Census Bureau in 2010 distributed fans to churches to recruit workers, especially in African-American communities that are typically wary of census takers. Colors of these fans in the first half of the twentieth century were earth tones and subtle, but today the colors are bright and garish. It has been said that what we've lost in our culture is a sense of subtlety.

Church fans always had Biblical images depicting scenes showing the miracles of Christ. Fans elsewhere within the community may have Norman Rockwell type paintings or pitch just about every commercial product of the times: Nehi and Royal Crown sodas, Lucky Strike cigarettes, John Deere tractors, Vitalis Hair Tonic, and hundreds of other items.

These handheld church fans may hold little monetary value but the memories they remind us of are priceless.

Source: *Inspired by an article in Our State Magazine, March 2011, "Holding on to Americana". William McNeill's handheld fan collection.*

Seneca Guns, Fact or Fiction?

Now and then, often on a beautiful, clear and sunny day, people in Southeastern North Carolina hear/feel strange booming noises. Some people report them as earthquakes while others claim they are hearing something like cannon fire. Others swear

they are hearing sonic booms from aircraft. However, upon investigation none of these things are happening. With sound louder than thunder and shaking much more than a truck going by, what is it? It may be less challenging to point to what the Seneca Guns are not.

Facebook postings range from the ordinary, like military aircraft to the outrageous like Indian ghosts and aliens. Some think it is the possibility of small earthquakes. Although this may sound reasonable, Dr. Johnathan Lees, a Geophysicist and professor from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, says earthquakes have nothing to do with this phenomenon. "There are earthquakes occurring all around the world that we are recording here in North Carolina," said Dr. Lees. "If we had a local earthquake, it would be impossible for us not to record that." Dr. Lee also states that of all the loud booms heard, recorded and studied there has never been any direct relationship discovered between any seismic activities.

Some theories abound that the continental shelf is slipping away. This is disproved by Jack C. Hall, professor of geology and chair of the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. "It's safe to rule out tectonic plate movement. The Mid-Atlantic Ridge is not going anywhere. Its movement is so slow it is not measurable on seismic charts," Hall explains. Hall also states that seismic records do not indicate any continental shelf landslides, and none have ever been recorded.

There are a number of aircraft and submarine testing and bombing ranges off the coast stretching from Florida to New Jersey with more than a dozen off the North Carolina coastline. Supersonic flight can certainly make a boom, but no military installation is taking credit for the booms, and no exercises have been reported at the time these booms occur. Furthermore these sounds were first described in a James Fenimore Cooper story, "The Lake Gun", published in 1851 long before man learned to fly.

Geophysicists say some theories could be eliminated by installing a seismometer and sensitive microphones along the Carolina coastline, but since the booms do little more than rattle windows and

nerves finding someone to foot the \$20,000 bill will likely keep the public guessing as to what is causing the mysterious booms and related shaking.

Absent of convincing scientific conclusions the strange sounding of the so-called Seneca Guns has become the stuff of legends and literature. Returning to Cooper's short story, "The Lake Gun", which refers to loud explosive sounds coming from Seneca Lake in New York's Finger Lakes region. These booming sounds have been reported for centuries which white settlers said, came from "the lake gun." Members of the Seneca Tribe, however, considered the powerful sounds to be the angry voice of their god, Manitou. The prevailing story of the legend holds that irate ghost of Seneca Indians fire their guns to disturb the descendants of the people who drove them from their land. From this story comes the terminology "Seneca Guns" for our mysterious sonic booms.

The Seneca Guns are heard up and down the entire East Coast, but seem particularly concentrated off the Carolinas according to United States Geologic Survey or USGS. Similar booms occur along coastal India where they are called Barisol Guns.

Professor Hall states that with no measurable movement in the earth's crust to attribute to Seneca Guns, it makes more sense to look to the atmosphere for answers. "The right atmospheric conditions, such as an inversion layer, can put a lid on the atmosphere so to speak. It would create a situation where sound waves bounce from the ocean surface to the air layer and continue to bounce back and forth until the wave of sound reaches the shore," Hall points out.

Temperature inversions occur in coastal areas when upwelling of cold water decreases surface air temperature and the cold air mass stays under warmer ones. What's more North Carolina's coast juts out into the Atlantic, essentially creating a microphone effect. "Sound waves travel long distances and can generate a wall of sound like a base player at a Black Sabbath concert," Hall quips.

With that in mind it seems feasible that Seneca Guns boom loudest when an inversion layer amplifies a natural event, such as storms far past the horizon, or a man-made situation, such as breaking

the sound barrier. Hall surmises, "It all comes down to stratification. I'm also inclined to attribute the occasional booms to military games offshore as the source of an occasional eruption of Seneca Guns. Of course, the military folks are not predisposed to commenting on secret maneuvers." The problem of sonic booms is that they cannot explain Seneca Guns that occurred before supersonic jets.

Naval ships far offshore may be responsible for some of the booms. Under certain atmospheric conditions sounds can travel farther than usual so that they might be heard onshore as loud booms. This may explain some of the Seneca Guns before the age of supersonic flight. In particular naval gunfire might have caused some of the booms that were heard in the 1800's when it might have been more common for ships to fire within a few miles of shore. However, naval gunfire cannot explain the Seneca Guns inland around Seneca Lake.

In conclusion there does not appear to be any agreement on what causes the Seneca Guns. They have been occurring in several places around the eastern US and in India for at least a century or two. As far as anyone can tell they have only served to worry people but have never caused damage or injury. The Earth is a complex place and there is a lot about it that we don't understand. Seneca Guns however do not seem to pose a threat to anyone. With no definitive answers these booms, shakes and rattles have become a part of our lives here in Brunswick County. Some mysteries just cannot be solved.

Source: "***What is causing the Seneca Guns***", by Colin Hackman. WECT News.
"***Seneca Guns: The Booms of Summer***", by Pam Smith, Coastal Review Online.
"***Seneca Guns***", US Geological Survey Earthquake Hazards Program

Veterans Day

Memorial Day is often confused with Veterans Day. Why? According to the Department of Veterans Affairs: Many people confuse Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring military personal who

died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. While those who died are also remembered, Veterans Day is the day set aside to thank and honor **ALL** those who served honorably in the military in wartime or peacetime. In fact, Veterans Day is largely intended to thank **LIVING** veterans for their service, to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated, and to underscore the fact that all those who



served - not only those who died - have sacrificed and done their duty.

***Thank a veteran on or before
Friday, November 11, 2016***

Soldier Survived War and Smallpox

Solomon R. Ward, a private in the Confederate Army, was sent to the Elmira prison camp in New

York after the fall of Fort Fisher. He was exchanged on the James River in Virginia on March 14, 1865. Solomon was admitted to the USA Hospital in Bermuda Hundred, Virginia on March 21, 1865 with smallpox.

Upon returning to Brunswick County, he married Emeline, the widow of his best friend from the war, and moved into her home.

When Emeline's son from her first marriage came of age, he was given the old home and Solomon built a new residence. That residence burned down, but the old one has been found and in bad repair in Delco.

Solomon and Emeline are buried in a cow pasture on a large farm in Delco.

Source: *NC Civil War History Center*

Upcoming Events

November 19th: *Moore's Creek Battlefield Candlelight Tours.* The annual tours begin at 6:00 pm from the Patriots Hall. Call 910-283-5591 for additional information.

December 11th: *Brunswick Town 18th Century Christmas.* See how the American colonists celebrated Christmas. Time, 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm at the Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. Call 910-371-6613 for additional information.

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

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

New: _____ or Renewal _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Receive *Newsletter* by email: Y N

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

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

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

Email: davelewis@atmc.net

CALENDER OF EVENTS

BCHS Meetings: February 08, 2016
May 09, 2016
August 08, 2016
November 14, 2016

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