



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

## AUGUST MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC AUGUST 14, 2017 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, August 14, 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 August 2017 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* began the 58th Volume. Volume I, Number 1 was printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletter from September 1961 to November 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).

## Program

Mr. John Golden from Wilmington will be our guest speaker for the evening. Mr. Golden is a folksinger/storyteller who collects and performs coastal Carolina history and folklore. He will present a historical interpretation of the Civil War blockade runner, Captain Roberts, in stories and songs.

## Dues

**DUES** are now past due 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 Bob Armour or bring check or cash to the August meeting. Use the membership application found on page 7 for contact changes. Make checks payable to the **Brunswick County Historical Society**.

## Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina

Source: *“The Waterman’s Song”* by David S Cecelski

In October 1830 Moses Ashley Curtis arrived at the mouth of the Cape Fear River aboard a schooner from Boston. The North Carolina coast would be the young naturalist’s first landfall of his first voyage into the American South. Passage across the inlet’s bar and outer shoals was dangerous without a local pilot. The schooner’s master raised a signal flag calling for a local pilot from Smithville to guide him into the river. Curtis soon spied a pilot boat under sail heading through the breakers and across the bar. Approaching the schooner the pilot boat drifted alongside the larger vessel. “They boarded us,” Curtis wrote in his diary that day, “And what saw I? *Slaves!*-the first I ever saw”.

Guided into Smithville by the slave pilots, Curtis “found the wharf and stores crowded with blacks, noisy and careless”. After a brief stay his schooner sailed toward Wilmington. Unbeknownst to Curtis this leg of his voyage was like a descent through the Cape Fear past. He sailed by Sugar Loaf, the high sand dune where colonial militia led by Colonel Roger Moore were said to have conquered the last of the Cape Fear Indians. He passed under Fort Johnston with its oyster-shell-and-pitch-pine walls built by slaves in 1802. Along the western bank of the Cape Fear River, Curtis peered into cypress swamps draped with Spanish moss. Here and there hundreds of black hands had hewn out great rice plantations along the water’s edge.

Everywhere Curtis saw slave watermen: harbor pilots, oystermen, the entire crew of the federal revenue cutter, plantation boatmen. Among them was “a boat full of blacks that came rowing by us,” chanting a song “. Curtis scribbled the lyrics and a line of music in his diary: “O Sally was a fine girl, O Sally was a fine girl, O!” It was a refrain of a popular sea chantey, called “Sally Brown” that spoke longingly of a beautiful Jamaican mulatto. Other black maritime laborers crowded Wilmington on Curtis’ arrival, and in his diary he noted that “a boat came alongside with three negroes who

offered an alligator for sale.” Curtis had discovered the maritime South and the central role of African-Americans within it.

Until recently few historians have recognized the prevalence of generations of African-American maritime laborers along the Atlantic coastline. Scholars have tended to view the black South mainly in terms of agricultural slave labor-picking cotton, cutting sugar cane, winnowing rice, or priming tobacco, for example; but in recent years a new generation of scholars has begun to explore the complex and important roles played by black watermen and sailors in the Atlantic maritime world.

Nowhere is the magnitude of African-American influence on maritime life greater than along the seacoast and vast estuaries that stretch a hundred miles from the coastline into the interior of North Carolina. Slave and free black boatmen were ubiquitous on those broad waters, dominating most maritime trades and playing a major role in all of them. Between 1800 and the Civil War, African-Americans composed approximately 45 percent of the total population in North Carolina’s nineteen tidewater counties. They made up nearly 60 percent of the total population in its largest seaports. The percentage of black men working full-time as fishermen or boatmen or in other maritime trades probably ranged from as little as 1 percent on the upper reaches of tidewater rivers to as much as 50 percent or more on the Outer Banks, but any firm estimate would be recklessly speculative and probably deceptive. Most coastal slaves worked on the water at least occasionally, whether it was rafting a master’s timber to market once a year or fishing on the sly for their own suppers. Working on the water was a part of daily life for most tidewater slaves and their free brethren. Their preeminence in boating, fishing, and shipping can be seen again and again in contemporary newspapers, will and estate records, plantation ledgers, ship logs, court documents, and travel accounts.

African-American maritime laborers congregated in the wharf districts of every seaport, not merely Smithville and Wilmington, and their range and diversity far exceeded what Moses Ashley Curtis described in his diary. They worked long seines in

the rivers, guided flat-bottom boats transporting tobacco and other crops to the seaports, piloted vessels thru inlets and across the bars. In every port slave stevedores trundled cargo on and off vessels, while shipyard workers in bondage built some of the sweetest-sailing cedar and white oak boats afloat. Still other slave waterman hawked firewood to steamers anchored in the Cape Fear at night, gathered oysters on frigid winter days, shoveled coal in the sweltering fire rooms of steamboats, and manned the sloops and schooners that traded both within and beyond North Carolina.

A Wilmington stevedore named Thomas H. Jones wrote in a book "The Experience of Thomas H. Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-Three Years" (ca. 1854), how loading and unloading seagoing vessels exposed him daily to sailors and boatmen from up and down the Atlantic coast. He eventually used his position to identify a sea captain willing to transport his wife, Mary, and their three children to New York and later negotiated his own escape with a black sailor bound for the same city.

The nature of their labors frequently meant that they could not be supervised closely, if at all, for days or even weeks. For all their grueling hard work and severe hardships many maritime black laborers traveled widely, grew acquainted with slave and free blacks over a wide territory, and dealt with seamen who connected them to the revolutionary politics. Almost invariably black watermen appeared at the core of abolitionist activity, slave insurrections, and other antislavery activism in North Carolina. In antebellum Wilmington a slave harbor pilot named Peter was at the heart of a far-reaching conspiracy to help fugitive slaves board seagoing vessels bound for New England and Canada.

David Walker, born a free black and raised in Wilmington, became a celebrated abolitionist pamphleteer. After Walker settled in Boston in the 1820s, he recruited sailors at his secondhand clothes shop to carry copies of his "Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World", one of the seminal treatises of American antislavery thought throughout the South. He and his black colleagues, many of whom had roots in the maritime South,

were the driving wedge of early abolitionism in the North.

By virtue of their shared status as servants and slaves, African-Americans gleaned a great deal of maritime knowledge from coastal Indians. American Indians had fished on the North Carolina coast since at least 8,000 B.C. The Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Siouan tribes built villages primarily on rivers and estuaries, but they also built seasonal fishing camps on the barrier islands and in a variety of swamp and marsh habitats.

Even more important than benefiting from adopting Indian watercraft and fishing technology, African-Americans profited from gaining access to the native people's knowledge of coastal ecology and its seasonal cycles. As Algonquian society was forced to give way in the face of encroachment by the European colonist, it was the colonists' slaves who best watched and learned from the Indian fishermen.

The value of this accumulated knowledge can scarcely be exaggerated. Survival in the North Carolina tidewater never depended on mastery of a single fishery. Instead, tidewater people relied on having the knowledge, flexibility, and mobility to take advantage of a multitude of fish runs, seasonal cycles, and weather changes that could be read only with long experience and intimate familiarity with a host of coastal waters.

Slave watermen figured prominently by the end of the eighteenth century as African-American maritime life had gained a distinctive charter in North Carolina waters. Boat captains, masters of vessels, and planters had come to rely heavily on black laborers for their maritime skills and dependability, but they had been taught by eighteenth-century insurrections, escapes, and colonial wars that those watermen were to be feared as well.

A slave named Peter guided vessels in and out of the harbor at Wilmington. Merchants and planters depended on local pilots and skilled engineers like him to guide their vessels safely around the shoals on the Cape Fear River and across the narrow channel into the Atlantic. However Peter navigated more than freight. He also steered fugitive slaves

toward freedom along maritime escape routes that endured throughout the slavery era. In a little-known autobiography, his son, a former slave named William H. Robinson, remembered that Peter “enjoyed the friendship of two very distinguished Quakers, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Elliot, who owned oyster sloops and stood at the head of what is known in our country as the underground railroad...Father was with Messrs Fuller and Elliot every day towing them in and out from the oyster bay. This gave them an opportunity to lay and devise plans for getting many slaves into Canada... and my father was an important factor in this line”. The success of the slave-smuggling conspiracy was evident in October 1849 when a correspondent to the Wilmington Journal complained that “it is almost an every day occurrence for our Negro slaves to take passage and go north”. The newspaper’s editors lamented this maritime escape route as “an evil which is getting to be intolerable”. Alert to the landscape of opportunity, runaway slaves regularly headed to the coast instead of attempting overland paths out of bondage.

Wealthy planters and merchants held the reins of power, drafting and enforcing the state’s punitive laws, but lowly watermen, slave stevedores, piney woods squatters, reclusive swampers and sometimes even slaveholders’ wives and children defied those laws and sustained pathways by which fugitives might pass from land to sea.

When William Robinson escaped from an abusive master in 1858, he immediately sought out a group of fugitive slaves living in the nearby swamps to protect him. His knowledge of their hideout dated from his early childhood and fled to the “three mile farm” on the edge of a swamp near Wilmington. Similarly, in the mid-1850s runaway slaves enjoyed what petitioners to the governor called a “very secure retreat” in Brunswick County’s Green Swamp, then one of the largest bottomland swamps in North America. They built at least eleven cabins and carved out a garden and grazing area in the midst of the swamp. White raiders tried but failed to overrun the camp’s battlements in the summer of 1856.

Recognizing African American watermen as a critical link in aiding slave runaways, political leaders

sought through municipal ordinances to separate black sailors and slaves. Wilmington finally outlawed its slaves from piloting or stevedoring on seagoing vessels manned by free blacks. As further deterrent white authorities severely punished free black sailors caught aiding runaways.

Yet coastal slaves still dreamed of freedom and continued to dare the high seas all the way up to the Civil War. When war broke out, a few who had braved the sea’s escape route returned to guide Union vessels through North Carolina’s dangerous waters. David S. Cecelski writes, “the boundaries of slavery and freedom may have been more complicated than we have ever imagined.

## Abraham Galloway

8 Feb.1837 - 1 Sept.1870

*By Julie Franck, North Carolina State University*

Black suffrage, North Carolina [Republican Party](#) organizer, delegate to the [Convention of 1868](#), and State Senator, was born on February 8, 1837 in Smithville, North Carolina. His mother, Hester Hankins, was a slave and his father, John Wesley Galloway, was a white boatman.

At age ten or eleven he apprenticed to a [brick mason](#); and soon after he became a master brick mason he moved with his owner, Marsden Milton Hankins, to [Wilmington](#) – North

Engraved portrait of Abraham Galloway.

For about 100 years school histories have omitted one of the most decisive moments in the rise of freedom for African-Americans, a New Bern, North Carolina historian says. Abraham Galloway could be the first African-American civil rights leader.

Abraham Galloway, former slave, Union spy and military recruiter, militant abolitionist, advocate for

Black suffrage, North Carolina Republican Party organizer, delegate to the Convention of 1868, and State Senator, was born on February 8, 1837 in Smithville (Southport), North Carolina. His mother, Hester Hankins, was a slave and his father, John Wesley Galloway, was a white boatman and later Captain for the Galloway's Coast Guard Company in Brunswick County during the Civil War.

At age ten or eleven he apprenticed to a brick mason, and soon after he became a master brick mason he moved with his owner, Marsden Milton Hankins, to Wilmington – North Carolina's largest city and busiest seaport at the time. In 1857 he found the opportunity for freedom: hiding in the cargo hold of a boat, he made his way out of Wilmington via Philadelphia, reaching Canada with the help of the Underground Railroad. Shortly after settling in Canada West (now known as the province of Ontario), Galloway began working for the abolitionist movement, traveling throughout Canada and the United States. In 1860 he traveled to Haiti to work for the recruitment effort to organize a John Brown type military invasion in the American South

In April 1861 Galloway returned from Haiti and began working as a spy for the Union under Major General Benjamin F. Butler in North Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi where he was ultimately captured at Vicksburg. As a spy working for Butler, he went on many missions such as one to Beaufort, NC where he scouted marine landings in advance of General Ambrose Burnside's campaign against the North Carolina coast in the winters of 1861-62.

In 1862 while stationed with Wisconsin's 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Galloway took on a mission that led to his capture in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Growing up in North Carolina Galloway had many ties and relationships with slaves in the area, which were helpful for him as a spy there; but when Butler was ordered to lead an attack in New Orleans in February of 1862, he knew having spies along would be helpful and brought Galloway, who had never been to the Deep South. After reaching New Orleans, Louisiana on May 1st, Galloway traveled immediately to Vicksburg, Mississippi which if the Union could take would split the south in two. The Union

could not overcome Vicksburg, and eventually they were forced to abandon the effort and leave behind the slaves they had used in the effort as well as Galloway who had been captured. It is unclear whether he escaped or was released, but he ultimately made his way to New Bern where he appears to have taken on a final intelligence mission for Butler.

Galloway appears at this point to have left his role in military intelligence for the Union, moving toward a focus on recruitment of African-American soldiers for the Union and political aspects of the abolition movement. He also served as a guide for Robert Hamilton, a black journalist for the newspaper, the *Anglo-African*, leading him through freedmen settlements. In recruiting African-Americans to enlist for the Union, his approval and influence in New Bern spread across the North with success: within several months 30 black regiments had joined the Union effort. During the summer of 1863, Galloway spoke for many events, raised funds, recruited black soldiers, and kept his ties to other abolitionists. During this period he married Martha Ann Dixon in Beaufort, and in 1863 he was able to remove his mother, Hester Hankins, from enslavement in Wilmington to freedom in Union-held New Bern.

While he was a spy especially when he was in the Deep South, Galloway experienced many different perspectives of life as a slave in various places and the horrors and atrocities slaves went through. These insights may have given him a deeper desire to help slaves achieve freedom, abolish slavery, and gain equal rights under the law. Among North Carolina's freed people in the Union-held New Bern area, he became a powerful grassroots organizer, a coalition builder, and an orator. In coastal North Carolina Galloway appears to have had the most influence and authority.

On April 29th, 1864 Galloway led a group of black southern delegates to meet with President Abraham Lincoln to argue for African-American citizenship with suffrage and political equality. He was then chosen by freedmen in New Bern to serve as a North Carolina delegate for the National Convention of Colored Men of the United States that took place in Syracuse, New York. The convention

founded the National Equal Rights League.

In the fall of 1865, Abraham and Martha Ann Galloway moved to Wilmington where their first child, John, was born on December 16th, 1865. Galloway began advocating strongly for the Republican Party and on October 17, 1867 he was elected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1868 in Raleigh. Later he was nominated as a presidential elector and became North Carolina's first black elector. He was elected to the state Senate in 1868 from New Hanover and Brunswick Counties as well as for a second term in 1870.

On September 1, 1870 Galloway died unexpectedly at 33 years old, having had his second son Abraham, Jr. only six months earlier. About 6,000 people came to his funeral including all of the blacks of Wilmington and many whites.

*Sources: Ncpedia; Sun Journal, New Bern, North Carolina, February 3, 2013*

## The Seaborne Slave Trade of North Carolina

*Source: The Colonial Records Project, "The Seaborne Slave Trade of North Carolina", by Walter E. Minchinton*

By the late twenty century the importation of slaves into North Carolina had only received cursory treatment. In his discussion of the import trade of North Carolina, 1763-1775, Christopher Crittenden merely stated that "a few Negro slaves came from the British West Indies", while Harry Roy Merrens wrote that "very few Negroes were actually imported into the colony during the eighteenth century".

The maritime slave trade suffered because of North Carolina's notoriously hostile coast. Shallow sounds and rivers further restricted the draft of vessels and impeded communications inland. As a result, North Carolina ports proved inadequate centers of trade. The comparatively sparse population of the coastal areas also provided only limited markets for imports. North Carolina had no Charleston,

Philadelphia, or New York. Until the modest trade in rice and indigo developed to supplement the export of naval stores and animal skins, North Carolina ports furnished few commodities for return cargoes.

Although the colonial assembly established "ports" or customs districts before the Revolution, few records of the earlier years exist. Currituck, with no fixed collecting point, and Roanoke, with a collector of customs established eventually at Edenton, were the oldest ports. Bath became a port in 1716, and the assembly created Port Beaufort, with two centers at Beaufort and New Bern in 1722. Finally Brunswick became a customs district in 1731 with ports at Brunswick and later Wilmington. Registers for two ports, Brunswick and Roanoke, survived for some years in the late colonial period, and registers for all five ports, as well as some duty books that include imports of Negroes from 1787, exist for the late 1780s.

In nearly all cases the commerce in Negroes was incidental to the vessels' activities and not a regular trade. Thus, of the forty-two voyages into North Carolina ports for which records exist between 1723 and 1746, twenty-six vessels carried Negroes only once while five vessels carried Negroes on more than one occasion. Similarly, most of the seventy-four vessels that transported Negroes between 1749 and 1769 did so only one time. The exceptions were the brig *Wilmington* (fifty tons) of Brunswick, which carried slaves on seven occasions, the sloop *Nancy* (fifty tons) also of Brunswick, which brought slaves from Jamaica on five occasions, and six other vessels that each bore slaves on two voyages during that period

Figures on the importation of slaves into North Carolina by customs districts for 1768-1772 showed no Negroes were brought into Port Currituck, and only two were carried from the West Indies to Port Bath. The slave trade of the other three ports—Brunswick, Beaufort, and Roanoke—was fairly evenly distributed, with more slaves arriving coastwise in Port Brunswick, probably because it was nearer Charleston than the other two ports. In 1772 two vessels, a sloop and a topsail schooner totaling 120 tons, had cleared Brunswick for Africa, and a twenty-five-ton sloop had entered there

from Africa.

For the 1770's two shipping registers survive for the port of Brunswick, 1773-1775, that contained detailed information for individual vessels. More than 302 Negroes were imported through Port Brunswick during those years. Most of them coming from the West Indies, with thirteen percent from Charleston, and for some the origin has been obliterated entirely from the records. Of the eighteen vessels that came from the West Indies, eight carried slaves from Jamaica, five from Grenada and one each from Barbados, Dominica, St. Croix, St. Eustatius and Tobago.

The political and military tumult of the revolutionary war effectively ended the slave trade to North Carolina with only a few exceptions. One was the privateer *Fortunate*, when captured a vessel with thirty-six slaves and sold them at Brunswick in 1780. These exceptions represented isolated opportunities to turn the war's misfortunes into accidental profits and not purposeful trading in slaves.

In 1776 Brunswick was sacked by the British and thus its existence as a port and settlement came to an end. No attempt was made to reinstate it, and from that time on Wilmington served as the port for the Cape Fear region.

Unlike most of the new American states that outlawed the slave trade in Negroes after the Revolution, the import of slaves by sea was resumed in

North Carolina as the shipping registers that survived for all five customs ports for most of the 1780s reveal. The reports show that Wilmington in the customs port of Brunswick was the most active port, frequented by 56.5 percent of the vessels involved.

### Slave Order

In September 1851 John Hall, Inspector of Customs, Smithville issued the following order: "All vessels arriving at the anchorage of Smithville outward bound, with slaves on board working as stevedores, are requested to obtain from the owners of said slaves written permits to work on board..."

### Free at Last

Lieutenant W.B. Cushing, commander of the *USS Monticello*, arrived at the Cape Fear region on January 17, 1865 to demand the surrender of Fort Caswell only to find the fort abandoned. He then proceeded to Smithville to take control of the town and Smithville surrendered without protest.

Shortly thereafter, Cushing informed the blacks of Smithville that they were now free. A procession was then formed by the freed blacks who paraded from the garrison grounds to Moore St., then they marched down Moore St. to Boundary St., up Boundary to Nash St., up Nash to the garrison, where they dispersed.

## ***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](mailto:davelewis@atmc.net)

### CALENDER OF EVENTS

BCHS Meetings: February 13, 2017  
May 08, 2017  
August 14, 2017  
November 13, 2017

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