



# 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



## AUGUST MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC AUGUST 13, 2018 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, August 13th 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 2018 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* began the 59th 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

Our guest speaker will be Mr. Dean Doshier, a Brunswick County native born in Southport. Living in Varnamtown he worked many years with local "old time" boat builders. Several of his boats are still being used in area waters today. He will speak on the history of wooden boat building in Brunswick County.

## 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 February meeting. Use the membership application found on page 7 for contact changes. Make checks payable to the **Brunswick County Historical Society**.

*Editors Note: Crusoe Island lying along the Waccamaw River in the Green Swamp and once being in Brunswick County. A remote section of the county and almost impossible to travel to the county seat in Southport, residents of Crusoe Island petitioned Governor Benjamin Smith for this area to be moved to Columbus County. Gov. Smith granted the petition and thus the county line was moved from the Waccamaw River to the Juniper Creek line as it appears today. There are many legends and stories tracing the origin of the Crusoe Island people, this was an isolated area, where the inhabitants were almost entirely self-sufficient, living off the land and the waters of nearby Waccamaw River. The islanders, territorial in nature, earned a reputation "as a people who did it themselves or did without," wrote American historian William S. Powell. Here is but one story tracing the lives of Crusoe Island people. Transcribed as written and edited for clarity and space allowed.*

## **Grandchildren of Massacre**

**A French Colony descended from the only white persons who escaped death in Haiti during the Slaves' Rebellion of 1804 has been found living in the Carolina Swamps**

**By Ben Dixon MacNeill , New York Herald Tribune. Sunday, November 1, 1931**

In three continents where they sell the product of a factory that he helped to found, the recent death of Kinchen D. Council was regretted. In Crusoe's Island, N.C., where none of the tools made in his near-by factory was ever needed, men and women wept and looked backward over two decades through which he had been their untiring friend.

Mr. Council was a figure of a sort that is not rare in the post-bellum annals of the Southern states, but about his personality, there was a fertile individuality. Before 1861 his family was powerful and. After 1865 the family was destitute. The era produced a new generation of pioneers. When he was six years old Kinchen D. Council was sent to school. By noon of the first day he had reached the conclusion that the processes of education were entirely too cumbersome. He never returned to school.

But nowhere could there have been found a man of wider general education. He was at home with Greek, Roman and ancient Chinese cultures. He wrote in the classic manner. He hunted bear in Alaska and parrots and monkeys in the tropics. He was an astronomer of no men ability, and he could navigate a sip. He knew the turpentine industry probably better than an man living, and the tools that he and his brother invented and manufactured for that industry enjoyed and still enjoy a world monopoly.

But neither tool making nor bear hunting nor ancient literature was his passion. His great love was for historical research in obscure places.

Twenty years ago few people venture into the wilderness that lay along the Waccamaw River, in southeastern North Carolina, he came upon old man Buck Clewis and a clue to an historical mystery that provided him with a hobby lasting until is death.

For the meeting with Buck Clewis enabled him to discover a remnant of French aristocrats who escaped the black wrath of revolting slaves in Haiti 127 years ago. Interminable books have been written of the unparalleled butchery during the Desalines massacre in Haiti, which followed the French betrayal of Toussaint L'Ouverture. In general they agree that no white escaped alive from the island to tell the gruesome story; since that bloody day the rebellious slaves have owned the country that once was wet with their masters' blood.

Seven miles across White Lake swamp begins, and runs, tropically remote for forty miles toward the marshy shore of the Atlantic Ocean. The swamp almost touches the South Carolina line, but not quite. It lies over a good half of Columbus and Brunswick Counties, and a variable strip of higher land separates it from the Cape Fear River. Here and there through the swamp, usually near the meandering river, lie wide expanses of hills that attain a relatively high elevation. It abounded in all sorts of wild game, especially bear and deer.

Mr. Council was an inveterate bear hunter, and he was possessed of an insatiable curiosity about people. Twenty years ago he decided to venture into

the swamp in pursuit of a bear. His family, of course, decried the venture, and gave him up as hopeless. He was gone even longer than he had planned and when he came back he brought the skin of a vast bear and a face that glowed with a secret satisfaction. A member of the Board of County Commissioners he surprised his conferees at he next meeting with the declaration that something in the way of a school ought to be provided for the people of Cruesoe's island.

Deep in the swamp where his hounds were howling after the bear, Mr. Council had encountered Buck Clewis. Mr. Clewis was naturally surprised and taken aback, but in the face of a very genuine friendliness he overcame his obvious timidity and mistrust. There in the swamp a friendship was born that continued unflaggingly until recently. Mr. Clewis came at the head of a great company of his neighbors and wept unashamed beside a newly made grave among the ancient churchyard where the Councils lie buried.

It was probably a year - Mr. Council could not remember exactly before the elusive intimacy between him and Buck Clewis was strong enough to foster a timid invitation for the hunter to come up to the swampman's house. The appearance of the house had something strange, a little incongruous about it. To be sure, it was a rough thing of unhewn logs, but there was about it an echo of a grace, a shadowy charm that did not belong in the dim swamps. For a long time Mr. Council was not able to place it or to define it. Rather, it was something felt, something sensed.

Later he discovered that the something he sensed had a slew in the contour of the stick-and-mud chimneys, the sort of primitive chimney that chroniclers of the American pioneer have made familiar to everybody. But this chimney was different. There was an artistry about it. Instead of the raw sticks and mud narrowing into a flue, the sticks were completely hidden by a pinkish white plaster of native chalk, and the lines of the chimney were molded into a smooth curve. The tip of the chimney was a smooth, chastely decorative one.

As far back as he could remember Mr. Council had seen stick-and-mud chimneys, but nowhere had he

encountered one that was more than frankly utilitarian. This chimney was actually handsome. And that fact was filed away in his mind and taken home to be pondered over above the glowing forge where he was working out the design of some new tool. The chimney just didn't fit into the pioneer, the primitive scheme of things. There must be something back of it.

It was a harassing winter for the bear in the swamps along the Waccamaw River. Mr. Council and the Clewises and the Sassers and the Duvals hunted them assiduously, and friendship grew between the swamp people and the toolmaker.

Swapping story for story with them, Mr. Council listened with growing infatuation to the tales that the swamp people had to tell. And he wondered where they got the idea for decorating their chimneys. He feared that it would be considered rude to inquire directly about this and the mystery persisted until one night in his reading, he came across a picture of a French country place. The chimneys in the picture looked vaguely familiar, and then there was no mystery about it at all. The chimneys on Cruesoe's's Island were duplicates of the chimneys in the picture.

After that, bit by bit, as the Islanders lost their furtive timidity with him, and as he was able to turn inquiry deftly backward toward the beginnings of the settlement, the story began to piece itself together. Dimly remembered legends that had a singularly authentic ring of truth unfolded as he listened and when he would come home he would set down the tale in fragmentary notes.

Some day he planned to get all of these notes together and set down the story of this fragment of French civilization that had escaped from the Desalines massacre and had found its way to this remote swamp and taken root there. But somehow the quest was never quite complete; he was busy about so many other matters. First he must, over the opposition of his fellow commissioners, do something for this newly discovered race. They must have roads. They must have a good school and a church.

Now they have their school and their roads and

new modern methods of farming and a church. In two decades the swamp has been transformed, transmute. But Mr. Council died lately and the real story remains buried in the fragmentary notes that were twenty years in the making. Its verity had been checked as carefully as circumstances permitted.

The butchery of the French by the blacks in Haiti in 1804 was not quite complete. Members of four or five families of rich planters somehow managed to escape to the coast of the blood-drenched island. There they found a small boat, scarcely big enough to hold a dozen people. More than twenty men and women and children crowded into it without provisions of any sort and shoved off into the sea.

Happily, it was the only boat in sight and when the revengeful blacks rushed down to the shore in pursuit there was no boat at hand in which to follow them further. Late that day they were picked up by a barque headed for Wilmington, N.C. The master of the barque, when he discovered the identity of the castaways, was fearful. If the blacks set out to search the sea and the fugitives were found aboard his craft, things would fare badly for the master and the crew. But there were women and children to be considered. He did not cast them adrift.

He declined, however, to take them as far as Wilmington. Word might reach Haiti, and he traded there regularly. He put in at the mouth of the Waccamaw River, where it empties into the sea, thirty miles below Cape Fear, the entry into the Port of Wilmington, and there he set the fugitives shore, warning them never to disclose how they had come there. He suggested that they disappear into the swamp for the time being.

Making their way up the river, the band of refugees found the swamp not without habitants. Other fugitives, over past decades had found refuge there. Nearly a hundred years before a band of Portuguese pirates, pursued by Spanish ships, had run their craft shore near the mouth of the river, wrecking it. The Spanish landed and pursued them into the swamp. There they were in the third generation, when the refugees from Haiti made their way into the swamp in 1804.

Nor were they all. From time to time the number of inhabitants had been increased by the arrival of others who for one reason or another preferred the swamp to the formally settled parts of North and South Carolina.

These were their neighbors when the group of Haitian refugees came to Cruesoe's Island. There they built a settlement, and there they lived. An occasional wrecked ship off the coast brought them recruits and wreckage from which they made such necessities as they must have. Sometimes they were arms and powder, and sometimes tools and furniture.

Conditions were primitive in a degree that few colonies in the young republic had to endure. The fugitives from Haiti made themselves at home, hopeful that somehow a way back to France might be found. But they must have been broken in spirit by the sheer terror of what they had endured, and after a while the wilderness swallowed them. A new generation that knew nothing but the swamp and the plaintive dull sorrow of the old women took their places. They became one with the people they found in the swamp, with the swamp itself. A century passed.

In this return to the primitive these refugees gradually forgot the culture that should have been their inheritance. They forgot everything but the grim necessity of wrestling a living from the swamp. Forgot even the spelling of their own names, the spelling of any names. Cluveires became Clewis, and DeSaucerie became merely Sasser, and Formy-Duvall degenerated into a half dozen unimpressive variations.

And gradually their speech degenerated. What must have been a pure French became something that was not French nor American nor Portuguese nor Spanish, but had some of the characteristics of all of them. Then finally, American English came to occupy the dominant position. The fugitives brought with them a burden of terror that helped them to forget their native ways.

It would be difficult to say – and Mr. Council was reluctant to hazard a guess – as to how many of the fifteen hundred people scattered over the occa-

sional high ground in a hundred square miles of swamp are descended from the remnant who escaped the Black Rebellion. Half of them, perhaps, would not be a bad guess.

There must have been some amalgamation of races and families in the remote isolation of the forest: but the French strain, even after a century and a quarter, is definitely apparent. It is predominant, if you stop to analyze individuals, to set them over against definite types of their neighbors.

Small mannerisms that belong to the French by inheritance, a kindling animation that does not belong to the Portuguese nor Anglo-Saxon nor American Indian – nor to any combination of these peoples; a swiftness to perceptions, a lithe grace of movement and of speech that flashes up through the reserve that more than a century of isolation has taught them; an instinctive hunger for something that is pretty – a characteristic that may be the survival of an inborn hunger for something that is beautiful.

“If you laugh at these young fellows I’ll throw you in this river,” Mr. Council threatened genially one Sunday morning, not long before his death, when we were approaching a small company of youths wandering indolently along the narrow road ahead of us. “Half of ‘em, I’ll bet you, have got strings of beads around their necks instead of neckties, but they like ‘em, and you can like ‘em, too.

With no shyness at all, the youths – a dozen or more of them – stopped to greet him. They were friendly, and they were refreshingly eager about the prodigiousness of the automobile in which we were riding. Eight of them wore strings of gayly colored beads. It was part of their Sabbath raiment of festivity. They did not wear them with the stolid solemnity with which a primitive man would wear beads; they wore them with a sort of insouciance, with a sort of gayety, and their faces were young and eager, and, somehow, very appealing. I liked the beads and the youths who wore them, and I was not thrown in the river.

They were going to church. It was a primitive sort of service, under Methodist auspices. But Mr. Council had seen them, when he went to church

with them instinctively cross themselves when they knelt at the beginning of prayer. Crossing themselves must be something that has come down to them through remote inheritance.

“It’s sort of too bad”, Mr. Council would say, “To see ‘em changed from what they were. I expect they’ve been pretty happy down here by themselves. But it had to come to ‘em some time, and I have an idea that there has been something mighty fine buried down here in these swamps for a time, and maybe in a generation or two we’ll get something out of it”.

“That school they’ve got now – it’s not any better and no worse than most schools. Along with it they’ll be getting a lot of wild, crazy, modern notions, and they’ll get crazy like the rest of the world – but after a while something is going to sprout from here. I’ll not be here to see it, but they fetched something fine out of Haiti with ‘em when they came, and it’s been sort of incubating in this swamp more than a hundred years. Don’t know what it will be, but maybe you’ll live long enough to see if I am right.”

Two decades have passed since the modernization got underway. Housewives along the lower Waccamaw are beginning to comprehend a little the meaning of a home demonstration agent and the uses of a community club at the schoolhouse. But they are still a little bewildered about it. Another generation, a generation that is growing up and away from the black canopy of fear that has shadowed the swamp, a generation that can look at indifferent tolerance upon an exceedingly minor and not and not at all menacing Haiti, is on the threshold of Cruesoe’s Island, with its face toward a horizon with no brooding black cloud upon it.

A diminishing older generation still goes hunting for bear and talks in hushed, awed whispers of the legends of their grandparents and looks wonderingly, not quite believingly, upon the younger generation, that goes blithely about in automobiles, along roads that run straight where trails used to go windingly, and which talks in a cadence that seems strange to the oldtimers.

One of this older generation is old man Buck

Clewis. From the day when Mr. Council first went bear hunting along the Waccamaw to the day of his death, he prized Clewis' friendship above that of many distinguished people. There was, there is, a peculiar something about the ancient bear hunter of the swamps. His dark eyes have a light in them that is at once defiant and pleading, at once bitter and soft, that is afraid and yet trusting, derisive and yet friendly. In him Mr. Council found unending delight.

To find Clewis's duplicate, outwardly, would not require much searching along the countrysides of France. His voice, softened in the mellow air of the swamps, is pitched high against the roof of his mouth, like a Frenchman's, and his syllables are clipped and precise, even when he is well along in the colossal tale of how he once inadvertently caught the largest bear that he ever saw.

It happened in the dusk of early nightfall when Mr. Clewis was going along a shaded path in search of a sow that had wandered from her pen. She was a valuable sow, and it would not do to allow her to wander alone in the woods. A bear might get her.

Presently, Mr. Clewis saw her, ambling along, a dark shadow. In that day he was a very vigorous and agile man and he launched himself in a sort of flying tackle, aiming to land on her back and divert her toward the pen. He would ride her home. But it was not the errant sow about whose neck Mr. Clewis locked his sinewy arms. It was quite the biggest bear he ever say, wand the ensuing ride has become an epic of the swamps. It delighted Mr. Council endlessly when he would get the old man to tell it.

There will not be another such audience as Mr. Council was – neither for the bear story nor for talking over dimly recollected things that Mr. Council understood. Nothing has been the same since Mr. Council first came to Cruesoe's Island and nothing can ever be the same now that he will not come to it any more.

There are still bear in the swamps, but they have retreated a little from the highway that cuts through to the sea and along which clatter the buses hauling the children to the fine brick schoolhouse where

they all learn to read and to forget that a long time ago there were frightful things that happened. The teachers seem somehow not to care about those terrible days, but Mr. Council knew and understood. They talk about the improvement that had come to the neighborhood, about enlightenment. But for old man Buck Clewis the light somehow has gone out and when darkness finally overcomes the country of Haiti, as his grandmother was sure it would, there will not be anybody with whom he can talk it over understandingly, even should he happen to hear about it. The swamps now that Mr. Council does not come down anymore, have become forebodingly lonely.....

***Editors Note: Before reprinting this article I was able to correspond with a relative of Buck Clewis. Not being able to say how much is fact or fiction one thing is certain, the relationship and trust between Mr. Council and Mr. Clewis was genuine. I was told of the number of talented individuals that live or have lived in Crusoe. Talents ranging from woodworking skills, musical talents, professional people in business and the medical field, and military officers and personal serving our country. I was reminded how "old Crusoe has history and the new Crusoe has life", life that has been an asset to our area and nation. Thank you for your input and corrections.***

## **Crusoe Island Petition**

***Transcribed as written.***

To the Honorable General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, humbly sheweth.

We your Humble petitioners being residents of the County of Brunswick living on an Island in the Green Swamp about forty miles distant from the Court House of our County having two ferrys to cross git there and as Columbus Court House is only about fifteen miles distant from us we Humbly pray your Honorable body to dismiss us from Brunswick, Annex us to Columbus County our Island is known by the name of Crusow's Island our boundrys is as follows from the Wagamaw Lake to the head of the Clear Branch down the said cleare brance to Juneper Creek down said Creek to the River.

As your humble petitioners ever pray,  
J G F, Thomas Little, Joseph Hudson Thomas Hudson, Ethreldred Boozman, Urier Sasser, Archabald Boozman

*This document was introduced in the Senate of the North Carolina Legislature on November 30, 1810...From General Assembly records, 1810 Session, Box 3, Petitions, in the North Carolina Archives, Raleigh, NC.*

### Marriage

A marriage license was issued yesterday for the marriage of Mr. Albert W. Hewett (son of Anson T. and Sarah Kirby Hewett), of Federal Point township, and Miss Addie J. Lewis, daughter of Mrs. Georgiana Lewis (and William E. Lewis, deceased), also of Federal Point township (*all originally from Brunswick County*).  
Wilmington Star, January 22, 1911.

### To Be Sold

To Be Sold: At the court-house in Brunswick County, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in January next. Fifty Thousand Acres of Land in Brunswick County, lying on the Waters of Waccamaw, the property of Lewis Forney, or so much thereof, as will defray the Taxes due thereon for the years of 1803 and 1804, with the expense of advertising and sale.  
WM. J. Grissett, Shff. Nov. 6.

From "Raleigh Register and North Carolina State Gazette," Raleigh, NC, issue dated December 23, 1805.

### Area Events

**October 6, November 3, & December 1: Moores Creek First Living History Program.** Watch as historical reenactors demonstrate what life was like back in the 18th Century at Moores Creek National Battlefield. Be sure to visit their website for more information on what is offered. These are events are free and perfect for families or any one of any age! All programs at 10:00 AM.

**September 8. Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site, 270th Spanish Alarm: A Living History Saturday.** Living historians will present trades related to 18th century maritime culture. There will also be period weapons demonstrations and hands on activities for kids. East Carolina University's Dr. Charles Ewen will present "Blackbeard: How Do You Celebrate a Scoundrel?" Site Manager Jim Mckee will give a guided tour discussing the War of Jenkin's Ear and how it related to the attack on Brunswick in 1748. Kid Friendly. Time, 11:00 AM -3:00PM.

**October 27-28. BrunswickTown/Fort Anderson State Historic Site, Port Brunswick Days.** Living historians will demonstrate what life was once like in this early port town on the lower Cape Fear. This free public event will be held from 10 am to 4pm both days. Free and fun for all ages! Kid Friendly.

### *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 12, 2018  
May 14, 2018  
August 13, 2018  
November 12, 2018

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PO BOX 874  
SHALLOTTE, NC 28459



Boozman,