



NEWSLETTER

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

VOLUME LX

AUGUST 2021

NUMBER 3

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 2019 & 2020 Term

President: James Green
Vice-President: Gwen Causey
Secretary:
Treasurer: Bob Armour
Directors: Sally Robinson
Jim Marlowe
Dave Lewis

Newsletter Editor: Dave Lewis



AUGUST MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC AUGUST 09, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, August 9, 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 2021 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* began the 60th Volume. Volume I, Number 1 was printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletter from September 1961 to February 2021 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

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**.

Program

Our program will be in two parts. James Green, BCHS President, will introduce the Society's Website and there will be a short presentation titled: "Everybody Loves a Good Bear Story."

USS North Carolina

This year the battleship USS North Carolina celebrates two anniversaries; she turns 80 years old and has spent the last 60 years in Wilmington. Known as the “Showboat” and the fourth ship of the line called North Carolina, she was commissioned into the US Navy on April 9, 1941 and arrived at her final resting place in Wilmington twenty years later on October 2, 1961. She now serves as a memorial to more than 10,000 North Carolinians who paid the ultimate sacrifice during World War II.

When the keel of North Carolina was laid in October, 1937 at the New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York, she was the first battleship to be constructed in sixteen years. She became the first of ten fast battleships to join the American fleet in World War II.

At the time of her commissioning on 9 April 1941, she was considered the world’s greatest sea weapon. Armed with nine 16-inch/45 caliber guns in three turrets and twenty 5-inch/38 caliber guns in ten twin mounts, North Carolina proved to be a formidable weapons platform. Her wartime complement consisted of 144 commissioned officers and 2,195 enlisted men, including 86 Marines. Her crew came from all across our nation, young men who had grown up during the Great Depression and now determined to serve their Country in its time of need. Remarkably she lost only ten men during the war. A footnote in history states, “Without her brave, valiant and honorable souls the “Showboat” would just be another ship. It is because of their deeds and service to our nation that the “Showboat,” USS North Carolina, is more than just a ship. She is a living monument to their accomplishments and the ideals they represent. She is truly a shrine for a grateful nation to honor”.

During World War II the USS North Carolina participated in every major naval offensive in the Pacific area of operations and earned 15 battle stars. Being the most decorated US Battleship of WWII she saw action from Guadalcanal to Tokyo Bay all while the Japanese claimed to have sunk her six times but, she in fact lived on.

Her first combat action lasted about eight minutes.

On 7 August 1942 she was the only battleship in the South Pacific escorting the aircraft carriers Saratoga, Enterprise and Wasp. The Americans struck first sinking the Japanese carrier Ryujo. The Japanese counterattack came in the form of dive bombers and torpedo bombers, covered by fighters, striking at the Enterprise and the North Carolina. The North Carolina shot down 14 enemy aircraft with her antiaircraft gunners remaining at their post despite the jarring detonations of seven near misses. One sailor was killed by strafing, but the North Carolina was undamaged. Her sheer volume of antiaircraft fire was so heavy it caused the officers of the Enterprise to ask, “Are you afire?”

The USS North Carolina was decommissioned 27 June 1947 and placed in the Inactive Reserve Fleet in Bayonne, New Jersey for the next 14 years. In 1958 the announcement of her impending scrapping led to a statewide campaign by the citizens of North Carolina to save the ship from the scrappers torches and bring her back to her home state. The “Save Our Ship” (SOS) campaign was successful, and the Battleship arrived in her current berth on 2 October 1961. She was dedicated on 29 April 1962 as the State’s memorial to its more than 362,500 veterans of World War II including more than 10,000 who did not return.

James S. Craig, a Wilmington native, learning that the North Carolina was to be scrapped and sold thought this idea was unthinkable. Craig, an Army veteran and member of Wilmington’s American Legion Post 10 understood the significance of the ship and believed that he had to do something to try and save the Battleship.

Craig enlisted the aid of Hugh Morton, the former publicity manager for North Carolina Gov. Luther H. Hodges. Knowing that Morton had the governor’s ear, he knew that if anyone was likely to persuade the governor to do something, Morton could. It worked, and the governor agreed.

Saving the ship would be expensive. It would cost \$100,000 to prepare a new site, another \$100,000 to condition the ship for display, and \$50,000 to tow her to a new site. At a total of \$250,000, it’s the equivalent of about \$2.2 million today. Gov. Hodges suggested to Morton that instead of taking

the money for the ship from the state, why not get the people involved?

Morton came up with a plan to create a North Carolina Navy. From each of the state's 100 counties, they would select an "admiral" responsible for seeing that their counties met a fund-raising quota. Incoming Gov. Terry Sanford suggested they involve the schools, so every child who brought in a dime received a pass for free admission.

The "Save Our Ship" campaign raised nearly \$330,000, about three million in today's dollars. Everyone giving \$100.00 or more was named admiral and among those was none other than President John F. Kennedy. Of the 1.1 million North Carolina schoolchildren 700,000 gave at least a dime.

Her final resting place was to be chosen from Southport, Morehead City, and Wilmington. Southport and Morehead City had a curse: Their proximity to the ocean made the ship vulnerable, particularly to hurricanes. So officials decided to berth her at the safest location, the one farthest from the sea, Wilmington.

On September 25, 1961, the North Carolina began her final voyage, leaving Bayonne with the New York City skyline in the background. With no power of her own, nine ocean-going tugboats hauled her home.

The day before her departure Wilmington held an air show. Jimmy Craig went up in a plane with six daredevil paratroopers to get a rare glimpse of the North Carolina's slip. He'd finally see his three-year-long vision come true. The plane barely off the ground crashed on takeoff, exploding and instantly killing several while critically injuring about a dozen others, including Craig. He was flown to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. On October 14, 1961 the USS North Carolina opened to the public, and more than 5,000 people walked the ships decks. That same day, James Craig died from his injuries.

Sources: December 20210 Our State Magazine, article by Brandon Sneed. Digital library, ecu.edu. USS North Carolina Battleship collec-

tion, Ken Harbit. Battleshipnc.com.



File Photo

Hoey Says Battleship N. C. Speaks Language Dictators Understand

Source: Wilmington Morning Star, Friday, June 14, 1940. As written.

By Gregory Hewlett

New York, June 13 (AP). As sirens screamed and thousands cheered, a ship of war destined to be one of the mightiest units in the country's first line of defense skidded down the launching ways into the East river today.

It was christened the U.S.S. North Carolina and was proclaimed by the governor of that state and the secretary of the navy as a symbol of the stepped-up defense program ordered by the United States since Europe was plunged into war.

"It speaks a language that even a dictator can understand," said Gov. Clyde R. Hoey shortly before his daughter, Isabel Young Hoey, smashed a bottle of French champagne across the ship's bow. "It represents another effort of our great nation to provide an adequate defense."

"It is the ships completed in time of peace which make a nation strong enough to preserve peace," said Navy Secretary Charles Edison. "We tried sincerely but in vain to halt world rearmament. We build now, not not to aggress, but to be too strong to be aggressed."

"Though this vessel was designed and built for the

purpose of improving our national defense,” added Rear Admiral Clark H. Woodward, commandant of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, “we hope that its great role will be to increase our peace insurance.”

The North Carolina, 35,000-tons and 750 feet long, is a sister ship of the Washington, which was launched at Philadelphia on June 1, and of four others of the same class now under construction. The first battleships launched by this country since 1921, when the major naval powers limited the size and power of navies, they far surpass the United States dreadnaughts now in action and rank with the world’s most powerful floating fortresses.

It will be another year before the Washington and North Carolina are completed, and in two or three years after that they themselves will be outclassed. Work already had been started or ordered on four 45,000-ton monsters.

After the North Carolina slipped off the ways a dozen tugs pulled her to a dry dock where she will be fitted out with her armament, including nine 16-inch guns capable of firing a one-ton projectile 20 land miles.

Some 30,000 persons viewed the ceremonies but all were under war-time restrictions. To guard against sabotage and espionage, hundreds of police patrolled outside the navy yard walls, hundreds of marines and sailors were on duty inside, and federal agents and naval intelligence officers mingled with the crowd.

Fast Dreadnaught

New York, June 12 (AP). Details of the U.S.S. North Carolina, launched today, were withheld by the Navy department, but estimates by Fred T. Jane, Great Britain’s Authority on warships, indicate the big dreadnaught will, when commissioned, be able to do 30 knots-33.3 miles an hour.

Jane’s estimates show she will, in addition to the nine 16-inch guns, carry 12 five-inch, 51-calibre broadsides, and eight five-inch, 25-calibre anti-aircraft guns.

The ship’s armament at the waterline is 16 inches

Thick. Six inches of steel cover the main deck and four inches protect the gun deck. This deck armor is two inches thicker than in former battleships.

Two turrets covered with 28 inches of armor and mounting six of the 16-inch guns stand forward. After of them is stubby, elliptical conning tower conning tower, the captain’s station in battle, also covered by 16 inches of armor plate. Behind this, in place of the massed superstructure of previous ships, rises a cylindrical mast-bridge and range-finding station; then two stumpy funnels and another turret of siege guns and the almost bare quarterdeck and fantail.

Four anti-aircraft guns peer out on each side of the North Carolina’s main-deck center, while from the gun-deck below bristle six five-inch broadsides both to starboard and port.

She is expected to carry 1,407 officers and men. Two catapults surmount the main deck and four planes are read for observation or battle. The great oil-burning dreadnaught will be propelled by four propellers operated by geared turbines, and will be equipped with a new type of water-tube boiler.

After her shake down cruise next year when mechanical deficiencies are ironed out and her guns are tested she will be commissioned as the seventeenth battleship of the United States fleet. The North Carolina and the Washington, launched June 1, are of the 35,000-ton class.

By 1943 the navy hopes to have 23 battleships. Four now building-the Indiana, the Massachusetts, the Alabama and the South Dakota- are now under construction, and will be of the class of the North Carolina and the Washington but will be less expensive by \$10,000,000. Following these by about a year and a half will be the Iowa and the New Jersey, 45,000-ton battlewagons to be 880 feet long, and to cost \$100,000,000 each. When completed the North Carolina’s cost will be about \$70,000,000.

William Cushing’s Raids on the Cape Fear River

By Jamie Malanowski / Historynet.com

Lieutenant William Barker Cushing of the U.S. Navy pulled off one of the most implausible feats of the Civil War on October 28, 1864, when he sank the notorious Confederate iron-clad ram Albemarle with a torpedo launched from a small open boat. But the Albemarle triumph was presaged by a number of other successes for the audacious and quick-thinking Cushing. Two of those escapades occurred within four months of each other early in 1864.

In February 1864, Cushing—then 21, and the youngest lieutenant in the history of the Navy—was assigned to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, based at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, and given command of USS *Monticello*. By that point North Carolina, with its many twisty rivers and hidden inlets, was one of the few places where Rebel blockade runners still enjoyed success. Their preferred port was Wil-mington, 28 miles inland from the mouth of the Cape Fear, a river well-protected not only by forts and batteries, but also by shifting currents, changing depths, unmarked shoals and marshes and other navigation hazards that could ensnare even experienced pilots familiar with the area.

Soon after his arrival on February 17, Cushing, true to his reputation for independence and aggressiveness, brought his superiors a proposal to take 200 men and seize Smith’s Island, at the mouth of the river. Doing so would close one of the two entrances that blockade runners used to enter the river, and tighten their pass through the other. But Cushing’s superior, Captain Benjamin Sands, considered the plan risky and denied him permission with a curt, “Can’t take the responsibility.” As Cushing wrote later, “This, I confess, provoked me, and I told the Senior Officer that I could not only do that, but if he wanted the Confederate general off to breakfast, I would bring him.” He then began laying plans to do exactly what he had proposed.

Lieutenant William Barker Cushing of the U.S. Navy pulled off one of the most implausible feats of the Civil War on October 28, 1864, when he sank the notorious Confederate iron-

clad ram Albemarle with a torpedo launched from a small open boat. But the Albemarle triumph was presaged by a number of other successes for the audacious and quick-thinking Cushing. Two of those escapades occurred within four months of each other early in 1864.

In February 1864, Cushing—then 21, and the youngest lieutenant in the history of the Navy—was assigned to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, based at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, and given command of USS *Monticello*. By that point North Carolina, with its many twisty rivers and hidden inlets, was one of the few places where Rebel blockade runners still enjoyed success. Their preferred port was Wil-mington, 28 miles inland from the mouth of the Cape Fear, a river well-protected not only by forts and batteries, but also by shifting currents, changing depths, unmarked shoals and marshes and other navigation hazards that could ensnare even experienced pilots familiar with the area.

Soon after his arrival on February 17, Cushing, true to his reputation for independence and aggressiveness, brought his superiors a proposal to take 200 men and seize Smith’s Island, at the mouth of the river. Doing so would close one of the two entrances that blockade runners used to enter the river, and tighten their pass through the other. But Cushing’s superior, Captain Benjamin Sands, considered the plan risky and denied him permission with a curt, “Can’t take the responsibility.” As Cushing wrote later, “This, I confess, provoked me, and I told the Senior Officer that I could not only do that, but if he wanted the Confederate general off to breakfast, I would bring him.” He then began laying plans to do exactly what he had proposed.

In February 1864, Cushing—then 21, and the youngest lieutenant in the history of the Navy—was assigned to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, based at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, and given command of USS *Monticello*. By that point North Carolina, with its many twisty rivers and hidden inlets, was one of the few places where Rebel blockade

runners still enjoyed success. Their preferred port was Wilmington, 28 miles inland from the mouth of the Cape Fear, a river well-protected not only by forts and batteries, but also by shifting currents, changing depths, unmarked shoals and marshes and other navigation hazards that could ensnare even experienced pilots familiar with the area.

Soon after his arrival on February 17, Cushing, true to his reputation for independence and aggressiveness, brought his superiors a proposal to take 200 men and seize Smith's Island, at the mouth of the river. Doing so would close one of the two entrances that blockade runners used to enter the river, and tighten their pass through the other. But Cushing's superior, Captain Benjamin Sands, considered the plan risky and denied him permission with a curt, "Can't take the responsibility." As Cushing wrote later, "This, I confess, provoked me, and I told the Senior Officer that I could not only do that, but if he wanted the Confederate general off to breakfast, I would bring him." He then began laying plans to do exactly what he had proposed.

Shortly after sundown on February 29, Cushing took 20 men in two small boats and rowed several miles up the Cape Fear, past the guns of Fort Caswell and Fort Johnston, past the town of Smithville, where Brig. Gen. Louis Hébert, the Confederate commander of the area, made his headquarters.

Having sneaked past Smithville, Cushing's raiders turned and approached the town from the opposite direction, so anyone who might be watching would think they were coming down-river—and must therefore be friendly. After beaching the boats, Cushing took half his men into the one-street town. Even at night, its layout wasn't difficult to discern: the general store, the stable, the larger building that was a hotel. At the end of the street, the building with narrow windows would be the fort. Hébert would be staying somewhere comfortable, in a house. But which one?

Ahead of him Cushing could see a dark build-

ing—a salt works. Two black men, no doubt slaves, were sitting by the fire. "Where's the general?" Cushing asked. One of the men led him and two of his officers, Ensign J.E. Jones and Master's Mate W.L. Howorth, to a house with a large veranda.

Cushing crept onto the porch and quietly opened the door. Easing his way along as his eyes adjusted to the dark, he determined that he was standing in a dining room, and then a hallway. He had begun climbing the stairs when he heard a crash from below, with Howorth calling for him. Cushing hurried back to the dining room, where a large man in a nightcap confronted him, a chair raised above his head. The lieutenant punched the man in the face, later recalling, "I had him on his back in an instant with the muzzle of a revolver at his temple and my hand on his throat."

But after lighting a match, Cushing learned that the man on the floor wasn't Hébert but Captain Patrick Kelly. The general had left for Wilmington hours before, and the noise Cushing had heard was the sound of Adj. Gen. W.D. Hardman clumsily escaping through a window. Confederate soldiers would soon be on the way.

Cushing tossed Kelly his pants and waved him to the door. Then the three Yankee officers, the Rebel captain and the two slaves who were a boat ride away from freedom headed quickly for the river. Behind him, Cushing could hear shouts of alarm as Rebels filled the street, "but like the old gent with the spectacles on his forehead, [they were] looking everywhere but in the right place." Back in their boats, Cushing's party was halfway home before Confederates at Smithville ignited signal fires to alert other bases on the river that Yankees were in the area. "At one [a.m.]," Cushing wrote, "I was in my cabin, had given my rebel dry socks and a glass of sherry, laughed at him, and put him to bed."

Kelly didn't get to sleep long; Cushing roused him for breakfast on the commanding officer's

ship. That afternoon the lieutenant sent Ensign Jones to Smithville under a flag of truce, in search of clothes and money to make Kelly's stay in a Northern prison more comfortable. Ensign Jones was taken to the commander of the fort, a colonel also named Jones. After an understandably awkward beginning, the Confederate Colonel Jones showed his sporting side. "That was a damned splendid affair, sir!" he commented. The two went on to have an amiable chat, at the end of which Ensign Jones produced a letter from Cushing to General Hébert:

*My Dear General:
I deeply regret that you were not at home when I called.
Very respectfully,
W.B. Cushing.*

To be continued in the November Newsletter.

Jamie Malanowski is the author of Commander Will Cushing: Daredevil Hero of the Civil War. He writes from Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

Odds and Ends

For Sale: Wishing to remove from this part of the country, I will sell on accommodation terms, the Plantation and Lands on which I live, containing about one thousand acres, of which one fourth is

good swamp land. There are forty or fifty acres now in a state of cultivation, and under good fence, with comfortable dwelling houses, and all other necessary buildings, well watered as any in this county, and as well timbered with white and red oak. And a vast quantity of the choicest kinds of cypress. Said land is situated in Brunswick County, about thirteen miles from Smithville, about ten from Lockwood's Folly Inlet, and six or seven from Town Creek upper bridge.

If application be made by the last of May, a small stock of cattle can be also. I can be found on the premises when able, stamping about my farm and stable.

R. Mercer
Brunswick, April 22, 1839

From The Wilmington Advertiser, Wilmington, NC, issue dated April 26, 1939

To War and Back

By Jerry O'Quinn, March 23, 2015. Brunswick Confederate affiliation.

Thomas Hickman lived near Calabash and enlisted in the Confederate Army along with his neighbors and several relatives, including his brother, Harry. Lt. Hickman survived the Fort Fisher battle and imprisonment. He was paroled on march 5, 1865.

Continued on page 8.

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

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail _____

New: _____ 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, 2021

May 10, 2021

August 09, 2021

November 08, 2021

From page 7. He walked home from New York after several weeks of surviving on handouts and sparse remnants of farm crops found in the fields. He arrived home at Hickman's Crossroads in rags, so his mother made him a new suit of cloths from thread and material that she had spun and woven herself. After the war, Thomas was a farmer and a fisherman.

We are resuming our normal meeting schedule at the BEMC building on Highway 17. Looking foreword to seeing everyone after more than a year. Make your plans to attend and if possible arrive a few minutes early for a time of fellowship.

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 874
SHALLOTTE, NC 28459

