



NEWSLETTER

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

VOLUME LX

FEBRUARY 2021

NUMBER 1

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



VIRTUAL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 8, 2021

You are invited to a Zoom meeting scheduled for February 8, 2021 at 7:30 PM. Copy and paste the following address to your browser and follow the prompts to log in. <https://zoom.us/j/92699443595?pwd=NUZ3cFpYM0wvvalhQTGlnM0tWYUs2dz09>

Meeting ID: 926 9944 3595

Passcode: um3Etj

You will also be receiving an invite to the meeting via your email.

BCHS Vice-President, Gwen Causey, will host the Zoom meeting. Her program will touch on "Returned to Sender, a Letter from Germany." She will detail an article that first appeared in the January 21, 2021 issue of the Brunswick Beacon. She will also include a brief overview of the Sellers Family of Brunswick County.

Gwen is a retired Brunswick County school teacher and local historian. She is active in the DAR, a genealogist, and has guided local officials in their efforts to preserve our counties history.

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

From the Journal of John Nelson Bennett, 1834-1864

*Continued from the November 2020 "Newsletter."
Transcribed as written.*

When the term was over in Smithville, I went to Town Creek about seven miles from Wilmington and taught school six months with considerable success. I then went four or five miles further from Wilmington, to Monks Branch, and taught there about two years in succession. The people of this vicinity liked me as a teacher and I liked them as employers generally, so that I passed time at this place very agreeably. While at this place I read considerably and made some progress in my studies, though I have ever found a difficult matter to study much in text books, without some one as a teacher to whom I could recite.

While teaching here I frequently went to Wilmington, occasionally to Smithville and to my home, and once I went to Trinity College while S. W. Bennett, my brother was a student there, and was present at the Commencement. At last I got into bad health, had several attacks of the chills and fever, and finally left there and went home, thinking that teaching disagreed with me, and that I would leave it off for a considerable time at least. But when I got home I found that the people there were already wanting me to teach for them, and the next week after my arrival I agreed to take a school for four months and a half. I finished this school in the first part of December 1859. By this time I had saved a little money and was determined to go to College again. Having made extensive inquiries and formed some acquaintance with most of the schools and Colleges in the State, I made choice of Trinity College. I selected Trinity both for its excellence as an institution of learning and for its cheapness, and I never had occasion to repent my choice; and I believe now it is unsurpassed by any institution of similar character in the Country.

Chapter 5, Trinity College

On the 16th day of December 1859 I left home for Trinity College, having sent my trunks from Little River, S.C. by sea to Wilmington, and left there on the 27th, arrived at Goldsboro the same day, and reached Trinity on the evening of the 28th. The ses-

sion commenced in about a week afterward. I joined the Freshman Class which was then about half advanced. Our studies were at that time, Latin, (Virgil, shortly afterwards Cicero's Orations) with Latin Grammar and Composition, Greek, (Xenophon's Anabasis (soon after Heroditus) with Greek Grammar and Composition, Mathematics, Loomis, Algebra, and Geometry, Natural Science, Comstock's Natural Philosophy and Book Keeping. We also had English Composition once a week.

When I had been in College two weeks, I joined the Hesperian Literary Society. I was well pleased with the College, with the professors and students, and with the Society. I also liked the people in the neighborhood and was especially attached to Mrs. Brown and her family, with whom I boarded. I made rapid progress in my studies, taking first distinction in my grades as long as I remained at College. I spent my time very agreeably and profitable all the first session except about two weeks, either in March or the later part of Feb. in which I was quite sick with colds, fevers, etc.

The commencement passed of very finely in the latter part of June and then commenced the long Summer vacation of seven or eight weeks. During vacation I spent my time in reading, studying, and visiting, going once to Lexington, where I remained about three days. In the Spring of this year (1861) the war between the North and South commenced. During the vacation Rev. B. Craven D.D. the president of the College commenced a drill school, in which he use to exercised the students that remained at College during vacation. There were about eighteen or twenty of us and we had a very fine time of it drilling twice a day.

I had a great desire to progress rapidly with my studies, and I wanted to go faster than the usually Collegiate course required, especially as there was one member of my class who was somewhat in advance of the class and was intending to gain a class. I studied a little in vacation and when the session commenced I took up all the studies of the Sophomore Class and one Junior Class which was Logic and Rhetoric alternately. At the end of seven weeks I took up Latin and Greek in the Junior Class and left off those studies in the Sophomore

Class and one Junior Class which was Logic and Rhetoric alternately. At the end of seven weeks I took up Latin and Greek in the Junior Class and left off those studies in the Sophomore Class, and soon after I commenced the study of Analytical Geometry by myself. When Christmas vacation came off which lasted about three weeks, I studied pretty constantly, especially French and Trigonometry, and when the next session commenced I went regularly into the Junior Class, though I had one book Differential and Integral Calculus to make up. My studies at this time were Latin, Greek, French, Mathematical Philosophy, Chemistry, Uranography, Logic and Rhetoric, and Composition, which were so arranged that we had four recitations as day. I should have been getting along well now, but for the war which was raging. This rendered me dissatisfied; and I sometimes had a desire to take part in it, and when Newborne (New Bern) was captured by the Northern Army, I made up my mind directly to leave College and join the army. I made my arrangements accordingly and left Trinity College on the 18th day of March 1861, having been there fourteen months and twenty days.

Chapter 6, In the War from April 23rd 1862 to November 23rd 1864

I came home from Trinity College without meeting with anything extraordinary except that Goldsboro and Wilmington were both under martial law. The 20th and 30th Regiments N.C.T. were both in Wilmington, the latter of which I at that time expected to join. I came out on Town Creek Brunswick County, and was taken quite sick and was unable to travel for a week. While here I was strongly solicited to take a school and I came very near excepting the situation. I went on home and returned in about a week. Daniel L. Russell, Jr. was then making up a company and after consulting with him and others, I volunteered in his company the 23rd day of April 1862. I went down to Old Brunswick the next day where his company was then stationed. The company was not then fully organized, but they had elected, or rather acknowledged, Russell Captain. William Swain Senior 1st Lieut. both being engaged in making up the company. They had also elected a V. Goodman Junior 1st Lieut. and Wm. Daniel 2^{ne} Lieut. I started home on the next day; and returned to Old Brunswick on the 5th of

May; and the same day we were mustered into service by Major Wm. Lamb. That day by Russell's own request we elected Dr. F.W. Potter Capt., D.L. Russell Jr. Sr. 1st Lieut., Wm Swain, Jr. 1st Sergeant and went immediately on duty. We remained at Old Brunswick which was soon named Fort St. Phillip till the 24th of August of the same year when we was ordered to Ft. Caswell by the petition of Lt. Russell who was then in command of the company. (Our company being in the Heavy Artillery service staid the most of the time in Forts.) We had no adventures here worthy of remark. I once got three day leave to visit Town Creek on business and at another time two days to go to Wilmington.

Ours was Co. G. of the 36 regt. N.C.T. Heavy Artillery. Wm Lamb was Col., John A. Richardson Lieut. Col., and John D. Taylor Major. All three being elected after I went into service. Col. Lamb commanded at Ft. St. Phillip a short time when he was ordered to Ft. Fisher, and Lt. Col. Richardson was put in his place at Ft. St. Phillip. I thought at that time that I liked Lamb very much but disliked Richardson through afterwards Col. Lamb gave me ample reason to dislike him also. When we get to Ft. Caswell, Col. George A. Cunningham was in command there. He was decidedly a tyrannical officer, and a rigid disciplinarian, but appeared to be satisfied when the soldiers under his command came up to his laws, which is more that I can say for some of the commanders under whose authority I was in time of the war. When I had been at Ft. Caswell about a week I was taken sick with the mumps and typhoid fever both at once. I was taken to the Post Hospital and stayed there about ten days, and was then taken to the Hospital in Smithville. The mumps did not much hurt me, but I nearly died with the typhoid fever. I staid in Smithville eight or ten days and was then ordered back to Caswell. I went and remained on the sick list about a week longer and then reported for duty, though still sick and very weak indeed. In this time the yellow fever had broken out in Wilmington and was raging and soon after there were a few cases of it in Smithville. When I had been on duty about a week I was taken with a relapse of the typhoid fever was again taken to the Post Hospital for about ten days, where I nearly died a second time, and was again sent to Smithville. When I arrived there were several cases of yellow in the place, and but

one other patient in the Hospital. The Hospital Steward reported my arrival to Dr. Miles, the Surgeon in charge, who was then sick with the yellow fever, but I do not suppose that he knew what ailed him as he was taken that day. The Dr. sent me word not to stay there but go home. I immediately set about making ready, but as all were trying to take care of themselves, there was no chance to get any assistance from any of them. There were then three or four cases of yellow fever within forty yards of the Hospital and one lady died with it before I left. I was unable to walk but started on foot, and at dark got to John C. Swains who had the kindness and affability to order me off, either being or pretending to be afraid that he would catch the yellow fever from me if I stayed, although I told him that it was not the yellow fever that I had. I left there at dark scarcely able to walk, and after being ordered away three times more that night I got into a house twenty minutes before four o'clock in the morning. The people there were also frightened, but I told them there was no danger. In the morning I went to John Mercer's where I was kindly taken in, and I stayed two days. He then loaned me a mule which I rode eleven miles and sent back by the mail carrier, and staid that night with Peter Rourk, who treated me kindly. The next day I started on foot and walked six miles and was taken with another relapse. I staid that night with Jesse Bennett. The next morning I sent for D.K. Mints to come and carry me home which he did that evening. I reached home in the latter part of October, and staid there I believe about five weeks. I then went to my company at Fort Caswell, much better though still unwell, and on the 1st of December I reported for duty. On the same day I resigned the office of 1st Sergeant and Sergt. John Sellers was appointed in my place and I received the appointment of 2^{ne} Sergt. I did this in accordance with the request of Lieut. Russell then in command of the company, though after the trial I liked the position of 2nd Sergt. than that of the 1st. Not long before this Col. Cunningham was sent away from Caswell and the Fort was now commanded by Maj. J.D. Taylor, who was shortly after superseded in command by Lt. Col. Gwathiney an old navy officer who had no knowledge whatever of the land service. He was a disagreeable man, and though possessed of good sense, sometimes talked like a fool, while at the same time he seemed to be kind

hearted. During the winter of 1862 and 1863 we often looked for an attack, and worked on the fortifications several Sundays as well as all the rest of the week, but the enemy did not come. Sometime in the early part of 1863 Capt. F.W. Potter resigned his office and went into the Medical Department. The other officers of the company were promoted and Sergt. Wm. W. McRackan was elected 2^{ne} Lieut. who was indeed a poor choice for an officer. Time wore on and on the evening of July 4th I got a fourteen day furlough. I went home and from there to Trinity College and paid what I was owing there. While on this furlough I got news of the capture of Vicksburg, and also of the battle of Gettysburg, two disasters from which the South never recovered. About this time Lt. Col. Gwathiney was relieved at Caswell and Col. T.M. Jones was put in command of that post. I liked Col. Jones better than any field officer that I was ever under command of. Sometime, I think in October, the company to which I belonged was moved to Fort Campbell one mile from Caswell. We did very well at this post, better than we ever did while in service. About the first of Feb. 1864 we were ordered back to Caswell, and on the 9th of the same month we moved to Fort Fisher, the most hateful place I ever saw in my whole life. Just before leaving Fort Campbell, Capt Russell went to Wilmington and got into a fight with Capt. Swann and enrolling officer, for which he was arrested, court-martialed and cashiered. From that time forth the company was under command of Lt. Wm. Swain, a man altogether unfit for the place which he occupied. We stayed at Ft. Fisher till Nov. 23rd when our company with four others of the 36th N.C.T. and five companies of the 40th and the 10th N.C. Battalion, were ordered to Georgia to arrest the advance of General Sherman. While staying at Fort Fisher we had a gloomy time, or at least it was so with me. I used to go to Smithville occasionally, and sometimes up the Point which was very little better than staying in the Fort. I once got two days leave of absence to visit Town Creek. I staid the first night with John Briggs, the next with H.C. Leonard, and the next day went to Wilmington and tried at the General office to get my furlough extended in which I failed. I walked from there to Fort Fisher, staying one night with Samuel Mints therefore I was gone over the time granted to me. We used to have frequent cannonadings at Fisher, and the long roll was often beaten,

but up to this time we had had nothing like a battle.

From the Southport Standard, June 6, 1901

It becomes our sad duty to chronicle the death of Mr. J.N. Bennett, one of our oldest and highly respected citizens. For two months past his health had been declining. He had been removed from the home of his daughter, Mrs. T.J. Gore of Wilmington where he was first taken quite ill to his Town Creek home, where he died on Sunday night last of dropsy.

The deceased was one of Brunswick's most prominent citizens, having been elected twice as State Senator from the district in which the county was, beside other public work, and has been connected with the educational work in the county almost continuously for many years and was prominent educator of the county since his younger days, having been prepared at Trinity College.

The deceased was a member of Zion Methodist Church, and was for a number of years the teacher in the Bible class in the Sunday School there.

Mr. Bennett leaves four daughters, Mr. T.J. Gore of Wilmington; Mrs. Ora Wells, of Cronly; and Messes. Mary and Amanda Bennett, of Winnabow; and three sons, Messrs. Henry J. and John N. Bennett, Jr., of Wilmington; and Mr. D.A. Bennett, of Winnabow, besides numerous relatives in the lower part of Brunswick.

Editors Note: This concludes the Journal of John Nelson Bennett giving an insight of life in the mid 1800's in Brunswick County.

Britishers Fought Duel for Fair Lady

The Southern Code of honor prevailed on the Lower Cape Fear for much of the antebellum era, and duel, while uncommon, did occur.

In fact, what might be North Carolina's first recorded duel took place at Brunswick Town, near St. Philip's Church on March 18, 1765. The principals were Capt. Alex Simpson and Lt. Thomas Whitehurst, both officers of the Royal Navy's sloop-of-war HMS Viper. According to Alfred Moor Waddell, the dispute was over a local woman

(although some sources claim that Simpson was married, with children). Other sources claim politics was involved.

Most of the thousands who go to see beautiful Orton Plantation every year do not go the extra distance over the sandy road to the nearby site of Old Brunswick.

There's no particular reason for them to go there now, for only the thick brick walls of a ruined church can be seen.

But, almost two centuries ago, Old Brunswick was a thriving town, and near it two men dueled cruelly for the love of a Brunswick girl.

The story of that duel has been told and retold. And, it must be admitted, some of those telling it during the years since Capt. Alexander Simpson and Lieutenant Thomas Whitehurst had their duel have told it wrong.

The two men were officers of the British navy, both on the sloop-of-war Viper, tied up at Brunswick, which was 14 miles below Wilmington. Some tellers of the story say they dueled over political reasons, for they fought in 1765, and the people of the lower Cape Fear were upset considerably then by differences with the British government.

However, a correct account of the duel is given by Col. Alfred Moore Waddell of Wilmington, who knew and studied the lore of the section and who wrote a history of New Hanover County for the period from 1723 to 1800.

Colonel Waddell declares unqualifiedly that the duel could not have been caused by political excitement in connection with the Stamp Act Resistance. This fight was staged March of 1765, at Brunswick, fourteen miles below Wilmington. This was nearly nine months before the defiant demonstration of November 28, 1765.

Further Colonel Waddell says that a report filed by Governor Tryon with the Board of Trade shows that the difficulty resulted from a controversy between Simpson and Whitehurst as to which was the favored one with an attractive young woman who

then lived at Brunswick. Both men are said to have been most attentive to her. Naturally, their close personal relationship as captain and lieutenant of the Viper did not help to clarify a perplexing and embarrassing situation.

The record does not indicate which of the two men finally decided to issue a challenge. There was never issued any statement which would serve to reveal the identity of the young woman.

The ever increasing differences reached a climax early on the morning of March 18, 1765. Tradition says that the memorable duel took place in a thickly wooded section just beyond the confines of the town of Brunswick, and somewhat near old St. Philip's Church. The four walls of the hallowed edifice are the only evidences today that once a flourishing and busy Colonial town occupied the area.

Colonel Waddell's research proves that the duel was a particularly brutal affair. He ascertained that Simpson maimed and disabled Whitehurst's thigh with his shot. After his victim was stretched on the ground Simpson cracked Whitehurst's skull with the butt of his pistol. The force of the blow is said to have broken the butt and pan of the pistol. Simpson himself did not escape unscratched. Whitehurst's shot lodged in his right shoulder, coming out under the arm.

The record says that the witnesses before the Coroner's jury were Midshipman James Brewster and James Moringe. It is believed that they were seconds in the duel.

Simpson, immediately after slaying his adversary, is said to have left his ship and to have made his escape. Tryon later issued a proclamation offering 50 pounds for the arrest of the officer.

Tryon is then said to have communicated with Governor Fauquier, of Virginia, saying that some months previously, Simpson had married "Miss Annie Pierson, daughter of Mr. Ramsberg, whose husband keeps a tavern in Norfolk". As Mrs. Simpson had returned to Virginia, Tryon offered the suggestion that Simpson had followed her to the neighboring state.

In his letter, Tryon had made the observation: "The weak state of Simpson's health and the dangerous condition of his wound, strengthened the conjecture that the missing man is in Virginia", concluding with the observation, "it is not probable that he would venture at this time and in view of his physical condition, upon a long voyage to England".

Tryon then continued his observations through a characterization of Simpson's conduct as, "most extraordinary and reprehensible".

Simpson afterwards surrendered himself. Just where he had so successfully hidden himself for several weeks, Simpson would never disclose. He would not have reached a haven very far distant from Brunswick and Wilmington, due to the fact that he had suffered a painful wound.

Simpson's case was called for trial in the fall of 1765 at the October term of court, which was held in Wilmington.

This writer has had opportunity in the past to inspect the court records of civil issues tried at the same term. In several places these bear the elaborate signature of Judge Charles Berry, who presided. Although nearly 200 years now have passed, the writing is as clear and legible as if it had been done today.

Simpson was convicted of manslaughter. The solemn judgment was pronounced by Judge Berry, to the effect that he (Simpson) "be branded in open court with the letter "M" on the ball of the thumb of the left hand". This appears from the record of the hearing which is still preserved in New Hanover County Courthouse.

Two months later, Judge Berry killed himself.

Tryon wrote a letter to the Board of Trade, dated February 1, 1766. In this he said: "Mr. Berry, Chief Justice of this Province, shot himself in the head the 21st of December, 1765, and died in Wilmington the 29th of the same month. The coroner's inquest held an investigation and brought a verdict of Lunacy".

Old Docket Entries: The story of what happened in

the court room when Captain Simpson was brought before the bar of justice is told in the old document which gives the following outline.

“Wilmington, 23rd October, 1765. Court met according to adjournment. Present: The Honorable Charles Berry, Esq., Chief Justice, Robert Howe, Esq., Associate Justice.

The King versus Alex’s Simpson.

Evidence Sworn: Joshua Grainger, Jr., John Walker, William Lord, John Eustice, John fErgus, Wm. Hill.

Jurors: John Anderson, John Daniel, Uz Williams, Ben’j Rhodes, John Watson, Robert Walker, George Parker, William Campbell, William Robeson, Robert Walls, Benjamin Stone, John Gibbs.

Verdict: Jury finds the Defendant not guilty of murder but guilty of manslaughter. Court adjourned to Thursday evening.

Thursday, 24th Oct. 1765. Court met according to adjournment. Present, the Hon’ble Charles Berry, Esq., Chief Justice, Rob’t Howe, Esq. his associate justice.

Alex Simpson was brought to the bar to receive sentence and prayed the benefit of his clergy. Admitted.

Ordered that the prisoner be branded on the ball of the thumb of the left hand with the letter “M” which was executed in Court, and discharged by proclamation on paying the fees”.

Source: “Stories Old and New of the Cape Fear Region”, by Louis T. Moore. Chairman, New Hanover Historical Commission. As written.

Confederate Prowled Carolina Coast

By Regina Wilson, March 23, 2015

Jesse Wilson, a private in the Confederate army, was born May 26, 1831, in Pitt County. In 1856 Jesse married Margaret Ann Lay, with whom he had nine children. By 1860 he was a Brunswick County resident. From 1861-1864, Jesse served in “Galloway’s Coast Guard,” whose mission was to defend the coast from Cape Fear to Little River, S.C. While with Galloway’s Coast Guard he was detached to the Signal Service Corps. After the war he returned to the Shallotte area. He died of apoplexy on January 22, 1916.

There’s No Refuge in Wartime

By Charles T. Dunn, March 23, 2015

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

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

Happy Valentines Day

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 874
SHALLOTTE, NC 28459

