NEWSLETTER

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

VOLUME LX NOVEMBER 2021 NUMBER 4

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

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NOVEMBER MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC NOVEMBER 08, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the ***Brunswick County Historical Society*** will be held on Monday, November 8, 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).

Program

Our speaker for the November meeting will be Mr. Robert Potter. Mr. Potter is a native of Southport and will be talking about growing up in Southport and his families connection with the areas commercial fishing and their turpentine distillery on Beaver Dam Creek. Come to the meeting and hear Robert tell of the many facets of his life.

Dues

Annual ***DUES*** will be payable by the February 2022 meeting 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.**

BCHS New Website

The BCHS is pleased to announce their new and redesigned website. Created by one of our members, Mr. Charles Clemmons the new webpage was launched on August 9, 2021.

In addition to information about the BCHS the public can access other information including Historical Markers, Brunswick County History, past issues of our "Newsletters", Meetings and Upcoming Events, Photos, link to the Brunswick GenWeb site, and videos of past meetings. Also included will be a live feed for those unable to attend our four meetings per year.

Make a connection through your web browser by typing, brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org.

William Cushing's Raids on the Cape Fear River

By Jamie Malanowski / Historynet.com

Continued from the August 2021 "Newsletter".

After that adventure, Admiral Samuel Lee, head of the squadron, gave Cushing an independent command to hunt blockade runners. What should have been an ideal assignment, however, turned out to be a waste of time. In five weeks Cushing captured nothing more than an abandoned British schooner full of rotting coconuts and bananas.

Then on the night of May 6, CSS *Raleigh*, an ironclad that had been built in Wilmington, emerged from the river and attacked the Union fleet. The sudden assault was launched after Confederate inspectors discovered that another ironclad based on the river, *North Carolina*, was riddled with shipworms, and declared it unsound. *Raleigh*'s commander launched his ship into battle because he didn't want to risk suffering the same verdict, even though his vessel had never been designed to engage an enemy in open waters.

Raleigh couldn't manage to close in on the Federal ships, and steamed haphazardly around the blockading squadron, firing occasionally without ever finding a target. During the confusion a blockade runner steamed through the Federal lines, but otherwise no damage was done. At dawn *Raleigh* returned to New Inlet, then disappeared over the bar back onto the river.

Cushing now envisioned a new mission: capturing *Raleigh*. "I feel very badly over the affair, sir," he wrote to Admiral Lee in a melodramatic letter on May 9, "and would have given my life freely to have had the power of showing my high regard for you and the honor of the service by engaging the enemy's vessels. If they are there when I arrive, I shall use the *Monticello* as a ram, and will go over her or to the bottom.'' Lee soon endorsed the idea.

Cushing's first step was to scout his adversary. On the evening of June 23, Cushing, Jones and Howorth as well as 15 volunteers armed with small arms and cutlasses took off in a cutter to find *Raleigh*. Entering the river with muffled oars, they passed Fort Caswell and the other outer batteries without catching a glimpse of the ironclad. Although Cushing had hoped the ship would be waiting, he determined it didn't really matter. He was prepared to row to Wilmington if he had to.

The Federals traveled the first 12 miles—close to the half of the 30 that spread between the port city and their point of embarkation—half hidden by shadows. When they passed Fort Anderson, however, they found themselves in full moonlight, in view of sentries who immediately lit signal fires and took potshots at them. At first Cushing turned the boat around and rowed obliquely, feigning retreat, but as soon as a cloud slipped in front of the moon the lieutenant resumed his northward passage. Behind them the hubbub continued, as the Confederates searched for something that was no longer there.

By dawn the Union men were seven miles south of Wilmington when they pulled ashore and hid amid thick marsh grass and cattails. They spent the day resting and observing; Cushing counted nine steamers cruising past, three of them

blockade runners. Later they saw *Yadkin*, the flagship of Flag Officer William Lynch, commander of all Confederate naval vessels in the Wilmington area.

Cushing figured that once night fell he would take the men up to Wilmington and explore its defenses. Just as they were about to embark, however, two small boats came into view hugging the shore. It turned out to be merely a fishing party-but one with some important news: *Raleigh* had sunk the day after its wild ride, running aground at high water. As the tide fell, its bottom split open. Now it was a toothless wreck.

Cushing displayed no disappointment, deciding that the opportunity to make mischief in the enemy's backyard was the next best thing. With the fishermen as their guides, the Yankees headed farther north, toward Wilmington. Cushing managed to catalog the city's defenses-earthworks, guns, iron-tipped spikes, three rings of obstructions in total, backed by a battery of 10 naval guns. At Cypress Swamp they located Mott's Creek, and poled up the shallow stream to a point where it was crossed by a log road. They followed this rough path for about two miles until it intersected a turnpike, which one of the fishermen identified as the main connection between Fort Fisher and Wilmington. Lying in some tall grass there, they waited. The lieutenant figured that something of interest would eventually appear.

When a hunter passed by shortly before midday, the sailors jumped him. They quickly learned that he was in fact the owner of a general store about a mile away. Before they could question him further, however, a horseman clopped into view-a soldier toting a mailbag. In the face of eight or nine muskets and pistols, the man dismounted and surrendered his mailbag, which turned out to hold hundreds of letters full of information about the size of the garrison at Fort Fisher, the state of supplies and the deployment of its guns.

Soon the discussion turned to food, and Howorth suggested a daring plan. He would take the courier's coat, hat and horse and go to the hunter's general store, not far away. Flush with Confederate money taken from the mailbag, he would stock up for the group.

While Howorth went shopping-he eventually returned with chicken, milk and blueberries, the makings of a tasty picnic that, according to Cushing, "could not be improved in Seceshia"-Cushing and his men continued to detain passers-by, and eventually they were holding 26 people. Cushing figured that they would continue to sit there until the afternoon mail carrier bound for Fort Fisher came by, since he would likely be carrying the latest newspapers, always a good source of intelligence. But the courier apparently saw Cushing's men first, because he abruptly wheeled his horse around and began galloping back toward Wilmington. Cushing pursued him for two miles but never caught up.

Once the mailman reached Wilmington, Cushing realized that Confederate authorities would learn of his foray. Rebels up and down the river would be on high alert.

Cushing ordered the telegraph wire cut and then led the group out of the swamp. At the river, he loaded his captives into canoes that were then tied to the back of his cutter. Around 7 p.m. Cushing's little fleet headed to a lighthouse-occupied island in the river, where the Union lieutenant planned to leave the prisoners, confident they would soon be rescued. But as they reached the island, a steamer appeared on the horizon, seemingly headed toward them. Cushing and his men hid behind the boats; they were not detected, but he quickly changed his mind about what to do with his prisoners, cutting them loose in the canoes without sails or paddles. By the time they were rescued, he figured, any news they could pass on about Yankee raiders would no longer be a factor.

As the Union cutter headed for the mouth of the river in the predawn hours, it overtook a small boat, with four sailors and two women on board. Cushing's boat was already overloaded, but he felt compelled to take the six captive.

The prisoners were quick to taunt Cushing, however, telling him: "There are guard boats looking for you. You'll never get past Federal Point. There's 75 soldiers in a boat waiting for you."

Fight it out seemed the most likely option. Cushing had closed to within 20 yards of the ship, intent on ramming it, when he saw three additional boats pull out from the bar on the left, and then five more from the right. Too many, Cushing realized, to overpower.

He quickly steered the boat to the right, toward the western bar. His men pulled hard and in perfect sync, opening precious space between themselves and their pursuers. The surprised Rebels fumbled with their oars and lost time turning. Had they thought for a moment, they might have realized what Cushing had already figured out: There would be no escaping that morning through the western bar. There was a strong southwest wind that would fill the passage with breakers too strong to surmount. He would be left there, his men straining at the oars and his overloaded little boat a perfect bobbing target for the guns of Fort Caswell.

But the Rebel pursuers chased the Yankee boat and became all the more confused when it vanished. "Dashing off with the tide in the direction of Smithville," Cushing reported, "…by my trick of steering the cutter so as to avoid reflecting the moon's rays, caused the main line of enemy boats to lose sight of her in the swell."

The Confederates were now chasing something they could no longer see. Cushing kept looking to exploit an opening, and as he felt the pull of the tide and current beneath him, he realized something important: He was at the point in the channel where the tide split. One channel led back to Fort Caswell, close to where his trip had begun, and one channel led past Fort Fisher to the Atlantic. Cushing called for one more quick turn, and the cutter caught the channel to Fort Fisher; his men then rowed like they were possessed.

Leaving the Confederate boats struggling to turn around, the Union vessel shot ahead. Borne by the current, it began opening up distance from the Rebel flotilla - 30 yards, 50 yards, 100 - all but vanishing against the horizon. There was a final plunge into the breakers off Caroline Shoals to thwart the gunners at Fort Fisher, and the expedition was over. Cushing hailed the steamer *Cherokee*, which towed the small boat back to *Monticello*. By mid afternoon the Yankee raiders were again in their bunks, including Cushing, who had gone 68 hours without sleep.

Cushing's raid on Smithville was certainly audacious. He brought back valuable intelligence that would influence Union operations in North Carolina for the rest of the war. Even more important, his account of his adventures helped convince his superiors that young Lieutenant Cushing was a very special talent-special enough to take on the ironclad *Albemarle*, the Confederates' Roanoke River bully.

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

Cape Fear Indians

Before Wilmington and colonial Brunswick Town established southeastern North Carolina as we know it, the Cape Fear region belonged to the Cape Fear Indians. Not much is known about the Cape Fear Indian tribe. Even their name was given to them years after their first encounters with colonial settlers because their true tribal name was never recorded. The autonym of the Cape Fear Indians may have been "Daw-hee." Their name for the area was Chicora and of their villages only one, Necoes, is know by name. The colonists noted Necoes as about 20 miles from the mouth of the Cape Fear River.

Archaeologists believe that Native Americans have lived in what is now the state of North Carolina for more than 13,000 years. These first inhabitants now called Paleo-Indians by experts were likely descended from people who came over a then-existing land bridge from Asia.

Evidence found at the Town Creek Indian Mound located in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina suggests Indians lived there as early as 11000 B.C. This new cultural called "Pee Dee" by archaeologists gave rise to complex societies. The area became an important source of stone that Paleo and Archaic period Indians made into tools.

It is harder to know when the first people arrived in the lower Cape Fear as the coastal archaeological record is not as rich as it is in other regions. During the Paleo-Indian period the coast was about 60 miles further out to sea than it is today. So land where Indians might have lived is buried under water. In addition, the coastal Cape Fear region's sandy soil doesn't provide a lot of stone for making tools, and stone implements are one of the major ways that archeologists have to trace and track where and when Indians lived before 2000 B.C.

An archaeological dig during the summer of 2006 at a site along River Road south of the state port in New Hanover County shows that Indians lived in the area off an on from 7000 B.C. until the mid-17th century. Experts believe that Native American life and culture changed in the Archaic period beginning about 8000 B.C. It did so in part because the climate changed and became warmer. Big game died out, and the Indians hunted smaller animals such as deer and turkey and also traveled to gather food. They may have moved among several different campsites during the course of a year. As the Indian society became more complex, they began using the Cape Fear River as a major transportation route coming to and from the area. Prehistoric inhabitants probably participated in an extensive trade network allowing them to acquire many necessary raw materials not available locally. An example would be rhyolite. This stone was used in making weapons and tools and likely came from the Uwharrie Mountains in the Piedmont region near Asheboro.

Life changed most dramatically during the Woodland period which began in approximately 1000 B.C. During this period thousands of Native Americans likely lived in the Cape Fear region living in small villages. They began to use the bow and arrow during this time, and trade flourished. Appalachian mica made its way to the Cape Fear coast and shells and salt from this region have been found in the interior and mountains to our west.

Europeans first came into contact with the coast of North Carolina and coastal Indians in the 1520's. At that time Giovanni Da Verrazano recorded his impressions of Native American life in the lower Cape Fear region. Verrazano's account of his visit is short, but it does give some clues to what life was like for Native Americans.

In 1524 Verrazano returned to his home port in Dieppe, France giving this account. "…discovered a new land, somewhat low, but being within a quarter of a league of it, we perceived by the great fires that we saw by the seacoast that it was inhabited and saw that the land stretched to the southward." He and his crew first made landfall 15 miles below what is now Wilmington. His description of the inhabitants was "they were handsome, russet colored, and partially clothed. "Verrazano's account is one of the few available written sources on the Cape Fear Indians. Believing that whites were superior to the Indians he interpreted what he saw based on that understanding. Not knowing much about their way of life he declared, "We could not learn of this people or their manner of living, nor their particular customs, by reason of the short abode we made on the shore, our company being but small, and our ship riding far off in the sea." Still his account does suggest the southeastern North Carolina Native American population was relatively large when he visited.

Smallpox spread to the Carolinas during the 16th century from Spanish colonies in Florida, and by 1600 the population of the Cape Fear Indians was estimated to be 1,000. Years later in 1660 another European colonist by the name of William Hilton had an altercation with an Indian who used a bow and arrow from a canoe to shoot at Hilton and his crew. Hilton's records suggest that the Cape Fear Indians were living in well established villages, planted corn, fished, and gathered shellfish. They had bows and arrows and raised and ate cattle and hogs. Beads were also an acceptable form of tribute to the Indians in our region and they used them for trading with other Native Americans. In 1664 the settlement called Charles Towne was founded

along the Cape Fear River but was abandoned in 1667 after war broke out between the Indians and the settlers over British slavery of Indians. Threatened by an increasing European settlement the Cape Fear Indians in 1695 asked for and was granted protection from North Carolina Governor John Archdale.

By the early 1700's the regions demographic had quickly shifted. In 1715 there were only about 206 Cape Fear Indians living in five villages. Sixteen years later, Welshman Hugh Meredith noted, "There is not an Indian to be seen in the place…the small remains of them abide among the thickest of the South Carolina inhabitants." During the Yamasee War of 1715-1717, a number of Carolina tribes including the Cape Fear Indians turned against the white settlers, and disease also played a vital role in removing the Cape Fear region's Native American population. After an alleged Indian raid on Orton Plantation, Roger Moore in 1725 decimated the small Indian village at Big Sugar Loaf on the east bank of the Cape Fear River. Little presence of the tribe is reported on the Lower Cape Fear River after 1730, and no mention is made of the Cape Fear Indians after 1808.

During the Civil War the remains of an Indian settlement were frequently unearthed by the Confederate solders during their entrenchment around Fort Fisher. Large mounds of oyster shells, pieces of broken wicker pottery, arrow heads, and other relics of the Cape Fear Indians are still found on the peninsula below Carolina Beach especially in the Sugarloaf Dome area located in Carolina Beach State Park.

Today, the Skarure Woccon of the Cape Fear is a Precolonial Tribal Nation with a long and rich history concentrated in and around Brunswick, Bladen, Columbus, and Pender counties of the Cape Fear region. Skarure historically is translated in English as Tuscarora. The Tuscarora Indians were located on the lower Neuse River region of North Carolina while the Woccon Indians originally inhabited southeastern North Carolina and are related linguistically to the Catawba Indians. Surveyor, General John Lawson recorded in 1710 that the Woccon lived two leagues from the Tuscarora on the lower Neuse River in two villages, the Yupwauremau and the Tooptatmeer. Both villages had 120 warriors. He also noted that the Woccon also inhabited the lower Cape Fear region of then New Hanover County.

The Woccon joined the Tuscarora in their war against the whites in the war of 1711-1713, while some Cape Fear Indians fought with their Catawba allies under Colonel John Barnwell against the Tuscarora Indians. Following a peace settlement between the colonists and the Tuscarora nation, the Tuscarora forfeited hunting and fishing rights to the region between the Neuse and Cape Fear Rivers. This area was left to the Cape Fear and South Carolina Indians for their personal use. As a result most of the Tuscarora left North Carolina and migrated north reaching present-day New York and Ontario to join part of the Iroquois tribe. After the war the name Woccon was spoken less and less by the Carolinians and eventually became known as Waccamaw. The majority of the Woccon fled south into the swampy areas of the Green Swamp around Lake Waccamaw, while some ended up in Beaufort, S.C., and a few were absorbed into the Catawba tribe.

The Skarure people occupied much of the land of North Carolina up and down what is now known as the ocean highway, HWY 17 from Greenville, New Bern, Bertie County region reaching down to New Hanover, Brunswick, Columbus, Bladen, Robeson, and Cumberland counties. Some historians believe that this Indian trail was the beginning of the infamous "Trail of Tears" as the coastal Native Americans migrated along now highway 74/76 leading westward to the Cherokee territory in the mountains of North Carolina before continuing in 1830 to Oklahoma. As for the Cape Fear Indians after the Yamassee War they were moved to a colony of South Carolina Indians and settled inland from Charleston.

History of Brunswick County cannot be told without including local knowledge that has been passed down through many generations. The Cape Fear Indians are no exception and without written documents we must rely on these stories. Folklore has Indian villages throughout the region including but not limited to the Varmantown, the Lockwood Folly area and Boone's Neck close to the Shallotte

River. Arrowheads and shards of pottery have been passed down in a number of local families along with stories of mounds presumed to have been sacred Indian burial grounds. Disease brought by white European colonist infected the local Indians and soon decimated their villages. The few Indians that survived were taken in by the white families and traces of their DNA are said to still be within the county.

Sources: Cape Fear Indians, Wikipedia.
Cape Fear Indians, by William G. DiNome, 2006.
Cape Fear Unearthed: The Cape Fear Indians, by Hunter Ingram, Wilmington Star.
American Indians, Historicites.nc.gov
The Cape Fear Indians, by J.D. Lewis
Native Americans in the Cape Fear, by Dr. Jan Davidson, capefearmuseum.com
Cape Fear Indians, by James Sprunt
Local knowledge from Allen Bellamy, Bonnett Bellamy Fortiscue, Holly Hewett Long, Dave Lewis

Everybody Loves a Bear Story

By Gwen Causey, July 24, 2021

The oldest bear story I could find was printed in the Spring 1975 issue of *Kin'Lin"* . This is a true story handed down in a family that lived near Hallsboro.

In 1858 at the edge of the Green Swamp between the river mouth and Crusoe Island, there lived a family of seven. All the children had to help the mother with certain chores. The middle girl was assigned to churn the butter.

As she was churning, she noticed that her long dress kept coming up and then falling against her leg. At first, she thought it was her brother who had finished his chores and was teasing her. Finally, she looked down and saw a long black hairy arm.

Indeed, it was a bear reaching through the lower logs of the house from which some of the chinking had fallen.

Quickly they developed a way of capturing the bear. They chose a slim pole and prized the bottom log so that the crack through which the bear had stuck its front paw was widened.

When the crack was opened wider, the bear was able to insert his entire front leg into the house. At that moment, the pole was pulled out, leaving the bear helplessly wedged in the crack. The bear could not get away.

The next morning the father returned and the children greeted him with the news about the bear. He did not believe them and laughed at their "joke."

Later the father had one of the children go around and get the bear's attention so that he could aim at the right spot on the head of the bear to shoot him.

Stay tuned, more Bear Stories are coming!

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

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Address:_____

Telephone:_____ E-Mail_____

New:_____ Renewal_____ Amount Enclosed_____

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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

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