



NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
5152 NEW BRITTON LP NW. ASH, NC 28420

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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 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



FEBRUARY MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC FEBRUARY 13, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, February 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 2023 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* begins the 62nd Volume. Volume I, Number 1 was printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletter from September 1961 to February 2023 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

Mrs. Gwen Causey will be our program speaker for the February meeting. Her topic will be "Abraham Galloway: Former Slave and Freedom Fighter." Born in 1837 in Smithville, Abraham Galloway has been called by some historians "the first African-American civil rights leader."

Gwen is currently serving as the BCHS vice-president. She 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.

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 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**. Please address questions of your membership status thru our website.

A Day in Piney Grove – A Journey into Brunswick County’s Past

April 14, 2020 By David Cecelski

Essay reprinted as written with permission from Mr. Cecelski.

Today I am remembering a very special day just a couple months ago, before the quarantines and before the shuttered stories and empty streets, when Marion Evans and I explored a corner of the North Carolina coast that was completely new to me and seemed like an almost magical place.

Marion was my guide. She is a very talented local historian dedicated to discovering and preserving the story of the community where she grew up. The community is called Piney Grove and is now part of Bolivia, a small town 15 miles from Southport, in Brunswick County, N.C. Marion has been doing some extraordinary research on her great-great grandfather and the founding of Piney Grove.

She and I had been talking on the telephone for some time about the community’s history, but I had never met her before or been to Piney Grove. So when I was invited to give a lecture in Southport, I immediately called her up and asked if she might be willing to give me a tour of her part of Brunswick County while I was in the area. She graciously agreed and we spent a lovely day together. I felt deeply privileged to learn about a part of the North Carolina coast that most people know only from quick glimpses as they speed down U.S. 17 on their way to Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle and Brunswick County’s other beach communities.

“Old, Old, Old, School”

Marion and I met in front of the county courthouse in Bolivia, which I find a strange and intriguing name for a town of 143 citizens built on a little rise of land between Half Hell Swamp and what is left of the Green Swamp, up in the headwaters of Lockwood’s Folly River.

Why Bolivia’s founders named the town after either the country in South America or the

revolutionary for which it was named - Simón Bolívar, El Libertador – is a mystery. Despite its small size, Bolivia is the county seat of Brunswick County, which is the coastal county that runs from the Cape Fear River, just below Wilmington, to the South Carolina border.

At the courthouse I jumped into Marion’s car and we immediately headed off to explore the countryside. Along the way, she regaled me with stories about Piney Grove, the old African American settlement where she grew up on the edge of Bolivia, down along Pinch Gut Creek.

Though still young in age and even younger at heart, Marion is already the caretaker of the community’s history and the keeper of its stories. In a way she inherited that role from her grandmother, Goldie Evans. Much like Marion, she was the kind of woman that listened to the old people’s stories and remembered them.

Marion told me that her grandmother had 14 children, buried four, lived to be 101 years old and never seemed to forget anything. She described her grandmother as “old, old, old school.”

“Abraham Galloway’s Father and Mother”

Marion began her tour of Piney Grove’s history on Galloway Road, which excited me because it led through the neighborhood that may well have been the childhood home of the father and mother of the young slave rebel Abraham Galloway, the hero of my book “The Fire of Freedom.”

Abraham Galloway’s father had been a white ship’s pilot in Southport (not his owner), but he had been raised on a plantation on or close to what is now Galloway Road. Abraham’s mother, Hester Hankins, was an enslaved African American woman. She too was likely born and raised in the vicinity of Galloway Road.

At a place I am sure I would not remember now, Marion turned off the road and drove up into a quiet glade where she showed me a large cemetery full of Galloway’s and Hankins’s. We got out of the car and walked among the headstones, under the bluest sky ever.

I imagined that somewhere near there, perhaps by unmarked graves along the tree line where slaves used to be buried, young Abraham Galloway had come and visited loved ones he had lost.

“Piney Grove”

As Marion and I drove up Galloway Road, we passed old farms, broad pastures and deep woods. Only once or twice did we see another vehicle on the road. She told me that the road had always seemed like a special and enchanting place to her.

Everywhere we went, she pointed out interesting things: Piney Grove’s old farms, a pair of liquor stills in the woods, and unmarked graveyard – probably a slave cemetery – and the original site of the first St. John Baptist Church, which was built on Marion’s great-great-grandfather’s land, among many other sites.

“The Seven Sisters”

As we explored that far side of Bolivia, Marion also told me about the Seven Sisters. They were the Wilson family’s daughters, and she talked about them as if they still walked the Earth.

Almost 150 years ago, the Seven Sisters and their husbands and children founded Piney Grove. That was just after the Civil War, when that land was deep woods and turpentine camps.

Marion’s great-great-grandfather, Caesar Evans, married one of the Wilson sisters. Marion told me that a series of almost miraculous events had to happen to bring Caesar and her great-grand-grandmother Annie together and, later, for Annie and Caesar to end up in Piney Grove.

First, Caesar managed to escape from the Evans family during the Civil War. The Evans family was from Greenville, in Pitt County, N.C., but it is not clear if Caesar escaped from their plantation there or from family lands in Brunswick County.

After taking his freedom, Caesar had to pass through untold dangers in order to reach the town of New Bern. The Union army had already captured the town and it had become an important refuge for fugitive slaves from all over eastern North Carolina.

In New Bern, Caesar enlisted in the Union army so that he could fight for his people’s freedom. According to Marion’s research, he enlisted in the 37th Regiment, United States Colored Troops, in 1864. While serving in the Union army, Marion’s great-great-grandfather fought in the Battle of Fort Fisher, only a day’s journey from Bo-

livia.

Caesar Evans had barely turned 19 when he joined the Union army. But after the war, he returned to his old home and found his family again. He was fortunate. Unlike so many other former slaves who tried to find loved ones after the war, Caesar Evans even located his mother Pleasant and his sister Delia, alive and well. Their owner had sold them away from the rest of the family in 1863, in the second year of the Civil War.

The more Marion spoke, the more I saw the countryside around me in a new way. The more she told me, the more I felt as if I could almost see the people in her stories come back to life.

“Feeding the Alligators”

We soon stopped at another cemetery and while we wandered among the gravestones Marion told me stories about the people buried there and also more about Caesar Evans and his family.

Only a few years after the Civil War, in 1869, Caesar Evans married Annie Wilson, and they settled down in the pinelands of Brunswick County. They must have worked hard and been very frugal, because Marion discovered in old documents that Caesar purchased their family’s farmland in Piney Grove in 1881.

As we continued our journey, Marion and I passed the home where she grew up and the home of her charming mother, whom I had the privilege of meeting the next day in Southport.

Then we headed to Supply, a small town a few miles from Bolivia. On the way, we passed a creek where Marion’s school bus driver used to stop the bus and let the children feed the alligators.

“Where the Coffers Rested”

When we got to Supply, we passed through the little downtown and back into the country, and then Marion turned down a solitary dirt road I never would have noticed if I hadn’t been with her. A few hundred yards down the road, she stopped and we got out of the car again.

As she always does before going into the woods, Marion grabbed her hatchet in case, she said, wild critters or other varmints attacked her. Marion laughs all the time, but like her grand-mamma she does not play.

Hatchet in hand she led me back into the woods to what was obviously a very old cabin built of logs and planks. The planks in the cabin were cut uneven, by a sawmill that was not of this century or the last, and the logs that made up the walls looked ancient, though I don't really know if they were as old as they looked.

Marion told me that slave traders used to pass up and down the old King's Highway, a colonial road that was nearby. That I did know. I had read many historical accounts that mentioned that road, and I had read descriptions of the chattels of chained men and women that slave traders used to drive up and down it.



Cabin near Supply, Photo by David Cecelski

She said that local legend held that the cabin had been one of the places where those slave traders and their coffles rested for the night when they were passing down the King's Highway. If the legend is true, I knew that most of those slave traders were taking their captives one of two places: either north to the slave market in Wilmington or south to the big slave market in Charleston, where roughly 160,000 Africans had first arrived in the U.S. in slave ships.

There in the woods, on the edge of that out-of-the-way little town, Marion and I imagined those people there in that cabin. Maybe they sometimes camped around the cabin too, because I have read historical accounts of slave coffles numbering in the hundreds, far too many for that cabin's floor.

“A Graveyard's Ghost”

Near the end of our day, Marion and I also

searched in another stretch of woods, closer to Bolivia, for a graveyard that her grandmother Goldie Evans had often described to her.

Marion's grandmother, who remembered everything and never exaggerated about anything, said that she had seen a ghost there one day when she was a child walking home from school.

She was not the only one. Over the years, many others had seen the ghost, too.

The spirit, people said was the ghost of a local white family's son who died at Gettysburg.

Following her grandmother's directions, we found the old cemetery in thick woods near the Old Ocean Highway. Marion, of course, plunged right into the thicket, her hatchet at the ready, ghost or no ghost.

“The Landing”

When we came out of the woods again, Marion pointed up the road to a little bridge that crossed the Lockwood's Folly River. A long time ago, she said, boatmen poled flatboats up the river and came ashore at a little landing that was located near there.

The river is just a little stream by that point, but at the landing enslaved men would load barrels of turpentine, rosin, tar and pitch.

On large plantations, often thousands of acres, Brunswick County's enslaved men and women used to make vast quantities of turpentine, rosin, tar and pitch. It was by far the county's largest industry. They made the turpentine and rosin by distilling the sticky resin of the local pine trees, and they made the tar and pitch by smoldering pine wood in earthen kilns.

After leaving the landing, the boatmen carried the barrels far downriver. They traveled until they reached the salt marshes near the river's mouth and loaded them onto ships that carried them to sea.

“A Great Wailing in the Community”

Marion told me a hundred stories. She took me to an incredible number of interesting places. And she taught me a tremendous amount. We had a ball, too. Everywhere we went, we laughed a lot. But we also asked one another hard questions about the passage of time and how one comes to know a

place and how we tell its stories.

As we headed back to Bolivia, we also stopped at her family's cemetery, the Evans Cemetery, which is located in a copse of pines not far from the Friendship Church.

***Caesar Evans, Born 1846, Died January 8, 1928.
Gone but not forgotten.***

He died, Marion said, during a great thunderstorm, and when he breathed his last, the old people said that there was, and I quote Marion on this, "a great wailing in the community."



Caesar Evans (1846-1928) Courtesy, Marion Evans & family

Next to his final resting place, Marion's great-great-grandmother Annie is buried as well, and a host of Piney Grove's other citizens, some recent, but others going back many generations.

We visited Marion's grandmother's grave, too, which was covered with beautiful roses. Goldie Evans had passed away only a little more than a year ago, at the age of 101. She still carried her rifle on her back well up into her 90s.

As we stood there beneath the pines, Marion said that when she was young, if it was a Sunday morning, you could stand where we were in the graveyard and hear music all around you.

She said you'd hear gospel songs from two or three different churches rising above the fields and mixing with what the old folks called "devil

music" that was coming from the revelers at a juke joint down the lane. I suppose the folks at the juke joint had been partying all night.

As she spoke, I could tell that Marion liked it all: the memories of all the saints and all the sinners, too.

She liked the graveyard where her people rested together. She relished the beauty of the fields, the creeks and the swamps where her ancestors had made a home. She loved the stories that her grandmother and the rest of the old people had entrusted to her and she loved, no less, the memory of that music, the voices of the sacred and profane, all rising up to heaven.

Unique Calabash

***Tarheel Wheels, printed May 1969
Author Unknown, as written.***

It's one of those places people talk about when they say, "Don't blink your eyes or you'll miss it." You could, very easily.

Its few dozen frame houses, its one beauty parlor and combination mercantile store-filling station give little hint that Calabash, Unincorporated, population 160, is one of the most famous and unique centers of seafood dining on the Atlantic coast,

For along the quarter-mile road which leads through the town proper, if it can be called that, down to the rickety fishing docks along Calabash Creek, are no less than a dozen seafood restaurants which serve more than a quarter million people during the peak travel months of summer.

Except for the fact that its restaurants serve incredibly delicious seafood dinners, Calabash's growing prominence as a mecca for seafood connoisseurs is something of a phenomenon. At best, its location in lower Brunswick — its nearest neighbor a small farming community named Grissetown — could be described as remote. None of the restaurants advertise to any great extent, and there are no billboards or other such signs to capture the attention of motorists on nearby U.S. Highway 17.

Its restaurants are not owned by a syndicate, but rather individually by local residents, mostly descendants of seafaring men who settled there in the mid-19th Century.

But there is a certain quality about the place — perhaps it's the very nearness of the sea that gives most travelers cause to rejoice. There are no crowded streets here, no policeman's whistle shrilling above the din of the rush-hour. In fact, the town has only one stop sign (no light) and even the names of the streets are unknown except to those who live there.

In late afternoon, when ocean breezes always seem to calm, cooking smells from a dozen kitchens cling to the stillness and stir the appetite. It is then that the invasion of Calabash begins.

They come dressed in business suits and blue jeans, driving pickup trucks and Cadillacs. They come from as nearby as Southport and Myrtle Beach, just across the state line in South Carolina, to as far away as Maine and California.

They sit in ladder-back chairs and rest their elbows on vinyl tablecloths while devouring mounds of crisp, succulent shrimp, oysters, fish, clams, crabs and French-fried potatoes. They munch on hush-puppies and coleslaw and watch fishermen hang their nets, the same nets which just a few hours earlier hauled their fare from the sea, along the creek banks.

There is nothing fancy about Calabash. Indeed, there may be some unaccustomed to such quaintness who would claim that the business of un-pretensiveness is carried a bit too far.

Calabash was first known as Pea Landing for the peanuts which grew in abundance in the rich farmlands of Brunswick County. Later, the settlement turned to the sea, and the name was changed to Calabash, the name for an Indian gourd, around 1873.

At that time, Calabash was one of the few places along that part of the Carolina coast where oysters could be harvested year-round. The first Calabash "restaurant" was probably a couple of empty barrels turned upside down around a tub full of steaming oysters. C.R. Coleman, who opened the town's first actual eating establishment about three decades ago, got into the business because many people who came to buy fresh seafood from his fish house insisted that their food be prepared on the spot.

Encouraged by Coleman's success, other families in the community built restaurants of their own. Soon, names like "Ella's Café," "Ivey High's," "Calabash Oyster Roast" and "Thomas'

Restaurant" stared back at infrequent travelers from hand-painted signs.

Things have changed at Calabash, but just a little. The restaurants are considerable more modern, the signs are now in neon, and the traffic is not quite so infrequent, especially on a warm night in July.

But the reason for people traveling so far to get there is still the same.

Test Your Brunswick County Memories

Wilmington Star News, October 3, 2007

BrunswickVoice.com contributor S.D. Warth writes from the point of view of a Brunswick County native about life hers in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s.

You might be a Brunswick County native if you...

Know that Joe's Barbeque originated in the Whiteville area. Love those hush puppies and sweet tea.

Remember Andy Pemberton's little gas station and store that was the last stop for gas to and from Wilmington. Now the area is called Bellville.

Have ever been chinquapin hunting? Hint: You don't shoot them.

Have ever been to a big oyster roast at Cox's Landing. Sweet music on that jukebox.

Remember when the name Robinson meant JW and Rosie at the Ebb Tide. Newcomers will recognize the last name of your Register of Deeds.

Played 8-man football or got your pecans from Mutt Maultsby.

Remember when Southport was the county seat and the only movie theater in the county was the Amuzu in Southport.

Remember when Willett's Ford and Elmore Motors Co. were the two big car dealers in the county and they were on Main Street in Bolivia.

Remember when the only hospital in the county was Doshier in Southport.

Remember when there were absolutely positively NO golf courses in Brunswick County, unless you count the Putt-Putt course run by Ira Butler in the summer on Long Beach.

Remember taking your date out for "fast

food” meant going to the Chick-Chick or the MilJo drive-ins in Wilmington.

Drove all the way to Southport to get your car fixed by J.B. or attended the sock hops at the Bolivia High School gym.

Bought your first diamond from Billy Tripp and when the Shrine Club was built on Midway Road.

Have seen the Beaver Dam light or remembered the smell of the poge factory or Took dancing lessons from Mrs. Belcher every Thursday I the Southport High School auditorium.

Went to GA camp at Fort Caswell Baptist Assembly (Rachel Kye was Queen Regent).

Went to the Pad at Ocean Drive Beach on graduation night.

There were sand dunes on all the beaches but very few houses. Doug Clark and the Hot Nuts were the ultimate in forbidden music. The summer people were our friends and we saw them every year.

Hurricane Hazel wiped out Long Beach and The Sawdust Trail was a bar an not a branch bank. Everybody took their boats up Dutchman Creek to protect them from the storm.

River Road was closed to build Sunny Point and Shannon’s store was near Orton Pond. The Red and White at Long Beach had all kinds of things you couldn’t find anywhere else.

Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs played for \$1 a couple and The Alpacas played for our high school proms. There used to be a huge billboard on US 17 that urged us to “Come to Harold’s Club.”

Battle of Moores Creek Bridge

The Moores Creek Battleground will be commemorating the 247th Anniversary of the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge on the weekend of **February 25th and 26th**. There will be a variety of living history events, a wreath laying ceremony and many colonial demonstrations during the two day event.

Our president, James Green, will be representing the BCHS and the public is invited to attend. Check their website or call the visitor center, 910-283-5591, for details and time.

Rice Festival Events

March 2, 2023: Local residents will explore their ancestral origins connecting them to rice-growing regions of West Africa. Navassa Community Center, 6pm - 8pm.

March 3, 2023: Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Gala Dinner and VIP Reception. Leland Cultural Arts Center, 6pm - 10pm. Tickets available January 2023.

March 4, 2023: Indoor/Outdoor Festival Events. History and cultural presentation, live entertainment, food and much more. Brunswick Town/Ft. Anderson Historic Site, 10am – 6pm.

Check their website for details:
www.northcarolinaricefestival.org/about-7

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

Please submit any articles or information for future newsletters to Dave Lewis.

Email: davelewis@atmc.net

CALENDER OF EVENTS

BCHS Meetings: February 13, 2023

May 8, 2023

August 14, 2023

November 13, 2023

Happy Valentine's Day

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

5152 New Britton LP NW.

Ash, NC 28420

