



NEWSLETTER

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

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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
Webmaster: Charles Clemmons
brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org



MAY MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC MAY 08, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, May 08th, 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* began 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

Author and historian, David Cecelski will be our presenter for the May BCHS meeting. A native of the North Carolina coast, Dr. Cecelski has written several award-winning books and hundreds of articles about the history, culture, and politics on the North Carolina coast. He is the co-recipient of the NC Literary and Historical Association's Crittenton Award for lifetime achievement.

His topic will be about "Abraham Galloway: Former Slave and Freedom Fighter." Born in 1837 in the town of Smithville, Abraham Galloway has been called by some historians "the first African American civil rights leader" and is highlighted in Dr. Celcelski's latest book titled, "The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War."

February BCHS Minutes

Brunswick County Historical Society
Brunswick Electric Membership Cooperation
Meeting Room, Supply, NC, February 13, 2023

The Brunswick County Historical Society meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by the President, James Green. There were 12 members and 5 visitors in attendance.

The President led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The minutes of the November 14, 2022 meeting were read and approved.

The Treasurer's Report included a bank balance of \$1,367.97. Income totaled \$30.00 for membership renewals of Robert Armour and Carol Neubert. The report is attached to the minutes.

There was no unfinished or new business.

The President spoke about the contents of our website. Members can now pay their dues using Pay Pal. He complimented Dave Lewis for the excellent Newsletters. The members agreed.

Ken Hewett, a visitor, was invited to speak about the Jesse Lancaster home in Varnamtown. His wife and her sister want to donate the house to the town of Varnamtown to be used as a museum. He is soliciting funds to aid in the moving of the building. His desire is that the house can be marked as a historic site.

Another visitor, Pauline Hankins, spoke of the Rice Festival being held on March 2-4, 2023. Events will be held in Navassa and at Brunswicktown State Historic Site. She has recently been appointed by the Senate to the North Carolina African-American Heritage Commission.

The Moore's Creek Battleground National Park will be commemorating the 247th anniversary of the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on February 25 -26, 2023.

The program was given by Gwen Causey. She spoke of James Washington Albright's Diary of his military exploits in Brunswick County, NC during the Civil War. Albright was a newspaper owner and textbook publisher in Greensboro, NC.

Motion to adjourn.

Members present: Jimmy Green, David Holden, Gary Quilliam, Bob Armour, Carol Jutte, Judy Holden, Jim Johnson, Meg Shelton, Gwen Causey,

Ann Bokelman, Dave Lewis, Rick Hollembeak.

Vistors: Ken Hewett, Christy Hewett, Tammy Cully, Barbara Varnam, Pauline Hankins.

Gwen Causey, Acting Secretary

Federation of North Carolina Historical Societies

The BCHS is now a member of the Federation of North Carolina Historical Societies.

The Federation is a statewide coalition of organizations, dedicated to working together to preserve and promote local history in North Carolina. An advisory board made up of twelve representatives from member organizations oversees the work of the Federation.

The Federation sponsors workshops and meetings; offers interest-free loans to members for the creation of historical publications (print or A/V) and special events; provides technical assistance; and nurtures a statewide history network. For more information, visit the Federation's webpage at., www.fnchs.org.

NC Historical Records Online

NC Historical Records Online (NCHRO) has completed a multiyear project to put 1.2 million images of original documents associated with all 200,000 North Carolina land grants on its free website, nclandgrants.com. NCHRO is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to providing public access to high quality images of original records and other related information useful to researching North Carolina history and genealogy.

The images on the website came from microfilmed records held by the State Archives of North Carolina and digitized by the State Archives' Micrographics Unit with equipment shown above right. Just one of the drawers in the cabinet above holds as many as 80 reels (view at right). Over \$12,000 in mostly small donations to NCHRO funded the digitization.

Many of these images are not available anywhere else online. NCHRO linked these images to a detailed database of land grants generously provided land grants recorded the conveyance of gov-

erment owned land to private individuals or organizations. A person did not have to be rich or special to obtain a grant; many Europeans first settling here obtained their land via land grants. They are the oldest and most complete set of North Carolina records, dating from the first grant issued only months after the Carolina Charter of 1663 to the final grant issued in 1960. They are useful to both genealogists and historians to help determine information about individuals, such as time and place, wealth, and neighbors, and about communities, such as settlement patterns, demographics, roads, bridges, mills, and other common facilities.

With this project now complete, NCHRO is focusing on digitizing other North Carolina records that are not available online and hosting them on a new website, *nscans.com*. This not only includes those held by large repositories, but also smaller repositories that might not have the resources or expertise to put their early records online. NCHRO is also collecting images of privately held records, some of which have never been seen outside of the family holding them. Visit nchistoricalrecords.org for more information.

Something Old

A measuring cup from another life,
Now off to a new kitchen & a new wife.
Ready to be of service to the happy pair,
As memories they make as they cook & prepare.

Some cake flour here, some spilt sauce there,
An apron used to be a wife's standard wear.
So if you're feeling old school or its sassy you
want to look,
Try this one on for size as you head over to cook!

And as life gives you both a reason to celebrate
Be it a special occasion, Sunday dinner or a date;
There are times when a table - it needs to be
dressed,
Think of me when you pull out this cloth for your
guests.

These things passed down from cupboard & chest
Once used by another, now long laid to rest
Oh how happy Madeline would be to know
That you ended up with her things from long ago!

Just as the heart's capacity to love cannot be measured, we want you both to know how much you are treasured!

Written by: Tami Lewis

Travel Between Brunswick County and Wilmington

The Cape Fear and Brunswick River ferry System

Source: Taken from, "A Maritime History and Survey of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear Rivers, Wilmington Harbor, North Carolina. Vol. 1, by Claude V. Jackson. Information for this essay was obtained from various Wilmington newspapers between 1870 and 1935, New Hanover County Court minutes, and the Bill Reaves Collection.

Travel along the eastern coast before the American Revolution generally followed a main artery known as the King's Highway or the Great Road. This route connected the northern colonies with Charleston and points southward. The last section of this road was established in 1732 between the Cape Fear and Neuse Rivers. When Brunswick Town served as the center of commerce along the lower Cape Fear River, the road extended from near the eastern landing of the Brunswick Ferry northward. Beginning in the 1740's Wilmington (Newton) began to establish itself as the leading port on the lower Cape Fear; its role was strengthened when the British destroyed Brunswick Town in 1776. With the ferry located at Brunswick made inoperable by the British threat, travel began to pass through Wilmington. The most difficult passage of the highway northward into Virginia ran westward from Wilmington across the huge morass know as Eagles Island.

Passage across the island was nearly impossible, and vehicles were ferried from Wilmington to a point south of the island, from which they had a tedious task to get to the main road connecting with inland North Carolina and upper South Carolina. The result was that in the year 1764 plans were made for the construction of a causeway across the island so that by means of ferries across both the Cape Fear and Brunswick Rivers vehicular traffic

could reach Brunswick County much quicker and with greater ease. After a lengthy process, Col. William Dry received a contract to construct the causeway across Eagles Island that connected the two river ferries. However, after beginning the project Dry died, and his son-in-law, Benjamin Smith completed the causeway.

On December 3, 1776, a petition of Joseph Newton to keep a ferry at Wilmington was granted by the court. By 1769 Darby Eagan is known to have been operating the Wilmington ferry. Eagan had maintained the Brunswick Ferry but sought to improve his standing in the larger and more prosperous town of Wilmington. On October 6, 1769, the New Hanover County Court denied Eagan "the keeping of the ferry over to Brunswick any longer, because he had engaged himself at the Wilmington ferry."

In 1777 Dry's heirs sold the rights to operate the ferry to Samuel Campbell, who incorporated them into the assets of the Wilmington merchant firm of Campbell and Hogg.

The earliest river ferries at Wilmington consisted of flatboats, often towed by rowboats. This method of propulsion continued into the early part of the present century when a gasoline boat replaced the self-propelled flats. In 1774 inspector Hugh Finlay while on a postal tour wrote: "I passed the first ferry across Brunswick River on a small leaky flat, the second ferry over the Cape Fear River in a large one but very wet." Four years later Ebenezer Hazard, also a postal inspector, noted the ferries and causeway in his journal. He mentioned that he "Staid in Wilmington till the 16th (January 1778), when I crossed the Ferry, rode over a dismal, swampy Island, which seems to be a Haunt for Herons & Turkey Buzzards, of about a mile and a quarter wide, cross a Ferry over Northwest River (Brunswick River) about 150 yards wide and lodged, not far from the Bank of it, at Mrs. Eagan's... There is a causeway across the Island, but it is in very bad order."

Wilmington travelers heading west or south to one of the plantations along the Brunswick River or farther inland drove their carriage down the incline at the foot of Market Street and on to a flatboat. "A bar would be raised at the front of the craft to prevent the horse from going into the river and likewise another bar would be raised on the stern to keep the vehicle from rolling backwards; the negro

boatman would take his place in his rowboat and the journey across the swiftly flowing river was underway." Arriving at the far shore the traveler and vehicle would then proceed across the muddy causeway to the Brunswick River where they would take another ferry, this time pulled along a cable across the river. For the privilege of crossing the two rivers and the causeway they were charged the sum of one dollar and twenty-five cents. The toll was collected on the Wilmington side of the river.

In 1856 John A. Taylor of Wilmington purchased the ferry service between Wilmington and Brunswick County from Martin Schulken for \$7,500. Taylor later willed the ferry to his son, Col. John D. Taylor. During the Federal occupation, Major James Reilly was in charge of the Market Street ferry. When he was made superintendent of the trolley system in 1873, he gave the day-to-day management of the ferry to Capt. Walter Furlong. That same year Col. John D. Taylor recommended to the county commissioners that a bridge be built over the Brunswick River. The commissioners approved the plan on September 15, 1873. The commissioners subsequently followed that action by incorporation the Brunswick Bridge and Ferry Company and giving it the right to build bridges and charge tolls. Col. John D. Taylor became the first president of the company.

On August 2, 1882, M.H. Rouse, then the lessee of the ferries across the Cape Fear and Brunswick Rivers, places the first steam-powered ferry, Little May, briefly in service. The small steamer towed a flat and conveyed passengers between Wilmington and Eagles Island. The Little May operated for two days as a ferry boat until it was relieved from duty and replaced by the old system of ferriage with rowboats. By October 1883 Eugene Maffitt assumed Rouse's lease and operation of the ferry. Maffitt intended to rebuild the causeway and repair the ferry flat to improve service. Following the death of Col. John D. Taylor, the management of the ferry passed to his son, Col. Walker Taylor. At that time waiting rooms for both blacks and whites were erected and a new flatboat put into service by Mrs. E.S. Tennent, Col. Walker Taylor and Daniel L. Russell, former governor of the state, who now jointly owned and operated the ferry.

In October 1892 Bryan Russell, brother of D.L. Russell Jr., came to Wilmington to assume

charge of the Market Street Ferry. In 1897 the new ferryboat Virginia Taylor, named in honor of the daughter of Col. Walker Taylor, was making trips across the Cape Fear. The Virginia Taylor was constructed from four different types of wood and could accommodate twenty-five passengers. Most of Daniel Russell's stock in the corporation passed into the hands of the Cumming Family following his death, while the additional interest in the Brunswick Bridge and Ferry Company owned by Tennent and Taylor was purchased on February 4, 1901 by D. L. Gore.

Gore, who now owned three-quarters of the stock in the company, set about to make extensive improvements at the ferry terminal on Eagles Island just prior to the turn of the century. The company constructed new frame buildings with metal roofs as required by a Wilmington ordinance to prevent sparks from passing steamers from igniting the structures. One new device also installed at the ferry terminal was an electric call bell. One push on the electric bell called a boat, two pushers and flat. Tolls for the Brunswick Bridge and Ferry Company were now three cents a wheel on vehicles and three cents a head on man or animal. On November 6, 1901, O.A. Durant became connected with the ferry company, which was deeply in debt, partially from the cost of the improvements. Under an agreement between Brunswick and New Hanover Counties Durant owned a one-third interest in the line and New Hanover County the remainder. Under his direction it became a paying business, the debt was removed and a profit was shown. Early attempts were made using naphtha-powered launches for the ferry, but they proved inefficient for the vessel could accommodate only fifteen to twenty passengers but had the advantages of towing flats efficiently across the river. The ferry measured 30 feet in length and 8 feet in beam and was equipped with a 12-horsepower engine.

Ferry Commission bought the Brunswick Bridge and Ferry Company in 1919 for the sum of \$24,000. New Hanover paid two-thirds of the cost and Brunswick County one-third. Included in the purchase were the causeway, two gasoline-powered boats, two flats, and a stable and shed on the island. Modern ferry slips were soon thereafter dredged by the Corps of Engineers at the eastern and western terminals. On June 7, 1920, the ferry commission placed into service the John Knox, a gasoline-

powered ferryboat. The newly built 80-foot vessel was named for the Brunswick County commissioner who had encouraged the idea of a joint county ferry system. On its early runs before the Eagles Island causeway was opened the John Knox took two hours to travel between Wilmington and the Brunswick River Bridge. The first crossing between Market Street and the eastern end of the causeway on Eagles Island was made on October 25, 1920. By December the ferry was making thirty-minute round trips between the city and the island with prospects of reducing the two-way passage down to twenty minutes.

The volume of traffic crossing the Cape Fear River and the success of the John Knox ferry prompted the ferry commission to acquire a second ferryboat by the spring of 1924. The county also purchased the 203-ton Menantic, a much larger craft at 98 feet in length and originally a steam paddleboat and also placed it into service within a few months after modifying the boat and enlarging the vessel's slip. The Menantic, although larger than the John Knox, was much older, having been built in 1893, twenty-seven years before its companion ferry was constructed. Both ferries maintained a continual service across the river, except during certain times in the winter when one ferry was sufficient or when a vessel was occasionally removed from duty for maintenance or repairs. On December 1, 1927, the ferry system implemented a toll reduction. The rate was then 15 cents for cars, 25 cents for light trucks, and 40 cents for heavy trucks.

To further accommodate the growth of Wilmington, a bridge system across the Northeast Cape Fear and Cape Fear Rivers was purposed. The construction of two bridges was eventually agreed upon by the counties, and in 1929 twin state-operated toll bridges were completed across the rivers from Wilmington to Eagles Island. A similar modern bridge had been completed across the Brunswick River in 1923. The new twin bridges might have meant an immediate end to the ferry system, but the Brunswick County commissioners voted to maintain the ferry service on a reduced scale. Only the John Knox was needed for the passage to Eagles Island and the Menantic was sold to George G. Dodge of Elizabeth City in May 1933 for \$2,500, a fraction of its original cost. The need for the Market Street ferry finally came to an end at 1:15 P.M. on February 6, 1935, when tolls for the



John Knox Ferry



Menantic Ferry

twin bridges were abolished. The ferryboat John Knox was sold in May 1936 to the R.R. Stone Company. In June 1937 the John Knox caught on a piling at Eagles Island and sank.

Editors Note: My grandfather worked for the ferry system sometime in the early 1900's. Wished I had asked for his information before his death in 1965.

The John Knox

Written by Brooks Newton Preik, granddaughter of John J. Knox, for the Whittler's Bench-Fall 2007 issue. As Written.

John J. Knox, for whom the ferryboat was named, was born on June 17, 1864, in the Seaside

community near Shallotte in Brunswick County, the son of George E. Knox and Sarah Ann Brooks Knox. In September 1889, he married Minnie Irene Drew, and the two settled on a large farm located approximately 10 miles south of Wilmington on Highway 17, a narrow, unpaved country road at the time. For some years in addition to raising cotton and produce, John Knox also ran a small grocery store and post office across the road from his home at what was then called El Paso station. Many of the supplies for the store came by boat from Wilmington via Town Creek and were unloaded at a landing on the creek nearby. Later, the post office was moved to Winnabow and the name El Paso was eventually forgotten.

The Knox farm, with its convenient location alongside the only roadway to Wilmington from Brunswick County, became a popular stopping place for weary travelers and John and Minnie Knox became known far and wide for their gracious hospitality. There was always an abundance of good food and a welcome at their table for unexpected guests, many from Southport, in the days before a multitude of motels and restaurants dotted the rural highway.

The couple had 10 children and because there were no schools in close proximity, Knox hired a schoolteacher to live at his residence and conduct daily classes for his growing family. Always interested in education, he and his wife made certain that their children received every educational advantage and all 10 children eventually went away to college.

John Knox was a lifelong member of Zion Methodist Church near Winnabow and in the early years transported his family to services by horse and buggy. In that same horse and buggy he made his earliest trips to Wilmington, where there was only a raft to ferry them across the river.

A progressive thinker, Knox was fascinated by new technology. He was the first man in the county to have a telephone and one of the first to own an automobile, though his sons remembered his difficulty in learning to drive. It took him ages, they said, to realize that the car would not stop no matter how loudly he yelled, "Whoa!"

In November 1908, when Brunswick County Sheriff Jackson Stanland was killed in the line of duty, John Knox was asked to fill his position. According to a December 4, 1908 account in *The*

Morning Star, it was Stanland's deathbed request. The Wilmington newspaper went on to say that John Knox was "among the best men in the county." Knox resigned as member-elect of the Brunswick Board of Commissioners and accepted. One of his first duties was to gather a posse and conduct a manhunt through the wilds of the Green Swamp in search of a fugitive. It was long and dangerous undertaking and one which neither he nor his family ever forgot. As sheriff, John Knox earned a reputation for being just an fair in all his dealings, and for the rest of his life, though his term in office was a relative short one, he was known, most respectfully, as Sheriff Knox. Some years later he also served as the county tax collector.

It was during his subsequent service on the Brunswick Board of County Commissioners however, that he publicized the desperate need for a ferryboat across the Cape Fear from Brunswick County to the foot of Market street. He wisely involved Wilmington community leaders and businessmen in his efforts to secure a ferry to navigate the river and in 1920 the ferryboat made its first crossing. Because he had worked so tirelessly toward that end and was largely responsible for seeing that dream become a reality, the first ferryboat was christened *John Knox* in his honor.

John Knox died from a heart attack in 1932 at the age of 68.

Editors Note: John Knox, died October 27, 1932 in Brunswick County. He and his wife, Minnie, are buried in Zion United Methodist Church Cemetery, Leland.

Dower Rights

Dower Rights refers to a married woman's 1/3 interest in her husband's estate, at his death. This was to protect her from an unscrupulous husband leaving her out of his will, or in the case of no will, she had protection. When a married man sold property, or took a mortgage, his wife had to sign for herself relinquishing her 1/3 interest to the buyer or the mortgagee otherwise she still had a 1/3 interest in someone else's property. The word is "Dower" rather than dowager; several of the original colony states continued this practice of dower rights for many years.

Dues

You may now pay your dues through PayPal on our website. **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 May meeting. Use the membership application found below for contact changes. Make checks payable to the **Brunswick County Historical Society**. Please address questions of your membership status thru our website.

There is no king who has not had a slave among his ancestors, and no slave who has not had a king among his. Helen Keller

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: 5152 New Britton LP Rd., Ash, NC 28420

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



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5152 New Britton LP NW.
Ash, NC 28420

