



# NEWSLETTER

**BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**5152 NEW BRITTON LP NW. ASH, NC 28420**  
[brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://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 - 2024 Term

President: James Green  
Vice-President: Gwen Causey  
Secretary:  
Treasurer: Bob Armour  
Directors:  
Dave Lewis

Newsletter Editor: Dave Lewis  
Webmaster: Charles Clemmons  
[brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org)



## AUGUST MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC AUGUST 12, 2024 at 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, August 12th, 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.

Publication of the *NEWSLETTER* began with Volume I, Number 1, printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletters from September 1961 to current dates may be viewed on the BCHS website by selecting "Newsletters" in the right navigation panel. The collection also 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

Charles M. Clemmons will be our guest speaker for the August meeting. Charles is a novelist and independent filmmaker, specializing in documentary films and videos for both broadcast television and non-broadcast. He is the third son of Moody Clemmons and Verna Smith Clemmons with family roots in Brunswick County going back at least 250 years. He was born at home in the countryside near Clayton, North Carolina, on what is now a state forest. Growing up in the American South, working on his father's farm, and exploring 300 acres of forestland as a boy proved to be formative life experiences.

Charles is a member of the BCHS, developed our website and serves as the webmaster.

In 2023, he published a novel of historical fiction entitled "*Aila's Journal: A Tale of Southern Reconstruction*," based on extensive historical research on the Reconstruction Era and partially inspired by family oral history. His presentation will focus on how the finding of that research were incorporated into the novel.

## North Carolina and the Turpentine Trail

*By David Cecelski, printed in the August 20, 2019 issue of CoastalReview.org. Submitted by James Green.*

“The typical turpentine laborer in Wiregrass Georgia in the 1870’s was a young, single...black man from North Carolina.” I found that sentence in Robert B. Outland’s Ph.D. dissertation, which later became his pioneering book, “Tapping the Pines: The Naval Stores industry in the American South,” published by LSU Press in 2004.

Here in North Carolina, naval stores meant turpentine, tar, pitch and rosin. Produced from longleaf pine forest, they gave North Carolina its nickname, “The Tar Heel State.”

Outland’s work chronicled the rise and fall of the naval stores industry, but what really grabbed my attention was this reference to a great migration of North Carolina’s turpentine workers to the naval stores industry in Georgia after the Civil War.

About one group of Georgia’s naval stores workers, he wrote: “of 178 turpentine labors working at (turpentine) camps along the Macon and Brunswick railroad in 1879, 80% were black...and 70% were born in North Carolina.” Most of those turpentine workers were young, single black men, and many of them had been born in slavery.

African Americans were not the only naval stores workers that went south, though. A large number of black, white and Native American people produced turpentine, tar, pitch and rosin in North Carolina. Many of them all left the state and went south after the Civil War.

They didn’t just go to Georgia’s forest, either. After the Civil War, they had gone first, in any numbers, to South Carolina’s pinelands, and then to Georgia’s. Following the pines, they scattered next across the southern states all the way from the Florida Panhandle to East Texas. Their exodus tell us a great deal about North Carolina’s coastal history if we think about who they were, why they left and where they went, which is what I want to do in today’s post.

### **The Longleaf Pine Forest**

My starting point is the great longleaf pine forest that once covered an estimated 4 to 5 million acres of North Carolina’s coastal plain. That forest

was the foundation of the turpentine trade and the rest of the naval stores industry.

The longleaf pine tree (*Pinus palustris*) once dominated the forest of coastal North Carolina and it was the source of all of the state’s naval stores – turpentine, tar, pitch and rosin.

From the longleaf pine’s sap, naval stores workers produced turpentine and rosin by chipping off V-shaped sections of bark and collection the tree’s gummy resin as it oozed out of the tree. They then distilled that resin to produce “spirits of turpentine,” which in New York markets was sold in at least 10 different grades, each with its own use. Rosin was a by-product of that distillation process. By burning the longleaf pines’ fallen limbs and other deadwood in earthen kilns, they also produced tar and pitch.

In the Age of Sail, those naval stores were essential for making wooden sailing ships watertight and preserving their planking and lines. Navies and merchant fleets throughout the Western World relied on those products made from North Carolina’s longleaf pine forest. Naval stores had many other uses, too. Turpentine, in particular, was valued as an illuminant and was widely used in lamps and streetlights in the days before petroleum’s discovery.

### **The Turpentine State**

As every school child here is taught, North Carolina was the capital of the country’s naval stores industry for much of the 1700’s and 1800’s. North Carolina wasn’t just the naval stores industry’s capital; it was practically the whole show.

Even as late as 1870, more than 95% of all naval stores produced in the U.S. came from North Carolina’s coastal plain. The bulk of it came from counties along the Cape Fear River. By most accounts, North Carolina’s seaports were the largest naval stores exporters in the world, rivaled only by those on the Baltic Sea.

In fact, to the average man or woman on the street in London or Paris, tar and turpentine were in most cases the only things they knew about North Carolina. To them we were “The Turpentine State” and later, of course, “The Tar Heel State.”

### **From Richlands to Wilkinson’s Point**

I’ve also written a couple of articles that might give you a sense of the size and variety of turpentine operations that were once on the North Carolina coast.

Some turpentine businesses were massive. One of the naval stores operations that I wrote about many years ago was a turpentine plantation in Onslow County, North Carolina, that covered more than 20,000 acres and required the labor of more than 100 enslaved workers. That was the Averitt family's Richards plantation, the location now of the town of Richlands.



Turpentine in North Carolina, probably in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Photo: Library of Congress.

Another story was about a much smaller kind of turpentine producer. It was called "John N. Benners' Journal: A Saltwater Farmer & His Slaves." John N. Benners resided on a plantation at Wilkinson's Point on the Neuse River in Pamlico County. He was a very common kind of turpentine farmer. Farming was the plantation's mainstay, but Benners and three or four enslaved men and women also did a little turpentine collecting, along with other enterprises such as logging and fishing, when they weren't needed in the fields.

Based on Benners' diary, none of them worked in his longleaf pine groves more than a few weeks a year. He probably sent the collected pine resin to New Bern by boat and sold it to a distillery there.

### **The Destruction of a Forest**

As Robert Outland points out in "Tapping the Pines," North Carolina's dominance of the nation's naval stores industry began to change drastically in the decades after the Civil War. By that time, the industry was destroying the region's longleaf pine forest. In a frenzied half century of exploitation, the state's longleaf pine forest fell from an estimated 4

to 5 million acres to less than 60,000 acres.

Travelers began to describe train trips through eastern North Carolina's pine forest in which they did not see a single tree that did not have the V-shaped scar that was characteristic of tapping.

Between 1870 and 1890, the state's share of the country's naval stores market plummeted from 96.7% to 21%. The longleaf pine forest was succumbing to ax and hack, as well as to insect infestations and diseases caused by the weakening of trees to being over-tapped. As the forest faded, turpentine workers, naval stores companies and their barrel, tool and other suppliers left North Carolina and headed to the longleaf pine forest in other parts of the American South.

### **From Beaufort County to Mobile Bay, Alabama**

Some left before the Civil War. As early as the 1840's, a number of turpentine planters left coastal North Carolina and moved as far south as Alabama and Mississippi in search of new longleaf pine forests, sometimes forcing hundreds of enslaved workers to go with them.

In "Tapping the Pines," for instance, Outland discusses a turpentine planter named James R. Grist. Grist and his father got their start in the naval stores business in the longleaf pine forest of Beaufort County, North Carolina. As they used up that "turpentine orchard," they invested in new longleaf pine lands closer to Wilmington, North Carolina, including a 6,000-acre strand of longleafs in Brunswick County.

As those longleaf groves declined in the 1850's, Grist searched for new pine lands again, this time in other states. He eventually found them on the Fish River, near Mobile Bay, Alabama. Taken out of North Carolina, a hundred of his enslaved African Americans established a new turpentine plantation there.

### **A Different Kind of "Great Migration"**

The migration – forced and otherwise – of North Carolina turpentiners to other southern states was a trickle in the 1840's and 1850's. After the Civil War, though, it became a torrent.

As they left the Tar Heel State, turpentiners resettled first in South Carolina, then in Georgia and Florida. For a half century, the large number of North Carolinians in those state's turpentine camps was legendary. As Outland writes in "Tapping the Pines:" "It does in fact appear that North Carolina turpentiners and their descendants dominated the

industry throughout the South in the late nineteenth century.”

As the decades passed, the longleaf pine forest in those Atlantic coast states declined, too, and the naval stores industry faded there, much as it had already done in North Carolina. Some of the turpentine workers returned to their homes in North Carolina. However, probably far more either stayed in Georgia or Florida and found other ways to make a living for strayed to distant cities during the “Great Migration” of southern blacks to the northern states. Yet others uprooted again and followed the naval stores industry to Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Their longleaf pine forest were comparatively unexploited and the rapid construction of railroads was opening up new pine lands in those states.

Yet another generation later, a few of those turpentiners and their descendants made it all the way to the Piney Woods of Texas, where the South’s great longleaf pine forests finally gave out.

Every experienced genealogist of the American South knows about this “turpentine trail.” Again and again, genealogist trace family ancestry back along that path of the longleaf pines and the naval stores industry. Those genealogists may start with a family that lives in Georgia or Mississippi or Texas today. But following deeds, marriage records and other historical documents, they can often track a family’s ancestry step-by-step back across the southern states. In many cases, they end up eventually on North Carolina’s coastal plain.

### **Peonage and Prisons**

Wherever turpentiners went, their life was not easy. They left North Carolina because times were hard, they had few other options and the naval stores industry was a life they knew. Bit naval stores work was always oppressive. Before the Civil War, North Carolina’s turpentine planters used enslaved workers for a reason. The work was hard, insufferable hot and ill compensated.

Peonage, basically slavery, remained an issue for turpentine workers in Georgia and Florida, among other places, well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, many observers, compared living conditions in those turpentine camps to antebellum slavery. Others compared turpentine camps to prisons.

Beyond the turpentine camps, the outside world was no picnic, either. When North Carolina’s turpentiners arrived at arrived at a little crossroads in

the piney woods of South Georgia or the Florida Panhandle, they often faced open hostility and a world of dangers.

They were, of course, outsiders – immigrants and strangers. Whether black, white or Native American, they were often treated like second class citizens and made to feel scorned and unwanted. Yet they left their homes and came south anyway, so bad had things become in what was left of North Carolina’s longleaf pine forests.

### **Shadow Memories**

Of course, the turpentiners and tar burners were not the only people from North Carolina’s coast that left. Over the generations, far more people left than stayed.

The list of those that left North Carolina’s coastal plain is long: uprooted farmers, the victims of bank closings and land grabs during the Great Depression, whole villages that gave up after the ’33 storm (and a dozen other major storms too), thousands displaced by military base construction and many, many more.

And there were others – well, far too many of the people that lived here left these parts simply because they found this land too oppressive, and found us too close-minded. All once belonged here, though, and I still think about them. I wonder where they all went and what became of them and where their descendants are now and how they are doing. I wonder what other longings they still feel, and what shadow memories they have somehow inherited , and perhaps hold somewhere deep in their bones, that go back to these shores and the once great longleaf pine forests that used to be here and are no more.

*Editors Note: Mr. Cecelski not only paints a picture of a once thriving industry along the coast of North Carolina but also of the people who worked in this harsh environment. He also brings up another real valid reason why Brunswick County surnames also appear in many other Southern States as they rode the wagon train south following their profession.*

### **E.M. Rosafy**

Editors Note: The May 2024 issue of the BCHS “Newsletter” contained an article titled “Brunswick County Records.” Melvin L. Sellers, a BCHS member, has provided additional information on a

person listed as receiving a teacher certificate, E.M. Rosafy. Mr. Sellers' research finds several items on Rosafy in "Southport, A Chronology, Volume I, by Bill Reaves.

He states that, *"Mr. Ernesta M. Rosafy was a busy man from 1868 to 1874. From page 53 to page 62, he was called a carpetbagger, was nominated to run for Senate to represent Brunswick and New Hanover Counties, caused a brawl at the Republican convention, was a Justice of the Peace and was sent to jail for unlawful seizure of property, was found guilty of false imprisonment, was tried for forcible trespass, was a Magistrate, was appointed Mail Agent for the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad, opened a bath house in Smithville, was under investigation regarding his conduct as Inspector of Customs, was reinstated as Collector of Customs, and his wife was appointed Postmaster of Smithville."*

E.M. Rosafy was one of the Southport Scoundrels included in Bob Surridge's presentation to the BCHS during the August 2023. He was a Captain in the 1st West Virginia Light Artillery during the Civil War. Rosafy died May 6, 1893 and is entombed at Arlington National Cemetery.

His death notice, printed May 6, 1893 in the Washington Evening Star states: *"Maj. E.M. Rosafy, who has been employed as a clerk in the Treasury Department since the close of the war, died of heart failure at an early hour this morning at his home, No. 60 C Street northwest. Maj. Rosafy, who was exiled with Kossuth, Klapaka and other leaders for the revolution of 1849 (Hungary's struggle for independence from Austria), came to this country while still quite young and rendered distinguished services during the Civil War.*

*He was a member of Lincoln Post. G.A.R., and is the third member of the post who has died this year. His funeral will take place Monday afternoon at 4:30 o'clock, and the services will be in charge of deceased's comrades in Lincoln Post."*

E.M. Rosafy and his wife Clare had a son born while living in Smithville. Louis Arpad Rosafy, born in 1869 and died on December 7, 1952.

His obituary posted in the Washington Evening Star on December 9, 1952 states: *"Louis Arpad Rosafy, 83, a government employee for 55 years, died of a heart attack Sunday at his home, 810 Hamilton Street N.W.*

*On his retirement in 1939 Mr. Rosafy was chief clerk in the old records department of the Adjutant General's Office. He began his Government career in 1891 as a clerk in the record and pension office of the War Department.*

*As a boy he was a Senate page. He was promoted later to be a riding page, carrying messages on horseback between the Capitol and the White house.*

*His father, Ernest Mathias Rosafy, was a secretary and associate of Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot.*

*Mr. Rosafy was injured in the Ford Theater accident of 1863. The theater was being used as a Government office and in the accident, which killed 22 and injured 68 when a floor collapsed, he suffered a broken arm and head injuries.*

*A native of Southport, N.C., he was a graduate in law of Columbian College. For many years he was active in the work of the National Federation of Federal Employees*

*Mr. Rosafy was living at the time of his death with a niece, Mrs. George E. Heisley of the Hamilton Street address. He is also survived by a grandson, William C. Nicholson, Jr., 1339 Fort Stevens Drive N.W.*

*Funeral services were held this morning in the S.H. Hines funeral home, 2901 Fourteenth St N.W. Burial was in Fort Lincoln Cemetery."*

## Henry Bacon

*Written by, Hunter Ingram and published in the "Inscriptions," Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, spring 2024 issue.*

Henry Bacon legacy may stand nearly 200 feet above the Reflecting Pool in the heart of Washington, D.C., but his story is laid to rest on a quiet hilltop in Oakdale Cemetery (Wilmington, N.C.).

The renowned architect's life and name will always be defined by his most famous creation, the Lincoln Memorial, in the nation's capital. But his roots run deep in Wilmington, a place that formed his identity as a youth, embraced him repeatedly throughout his life and ultimately gave him sanctuary in death.

One hundred years after his death on Feb. 16, 1924, Bacon remains one of Wilmington's most celebrated sons—even if his story doesn't begin

here. Born in Watseka, Illinois in 1866, his civil engineer father, also named Henry Bacon, moved his family to Wilmington in 1875 when the younger Henry was just eight years old. Almost all of Henry's formative schooling happened in Wilmington at Hemingway School and Tileston School, until he was sent to Boston at 16 and later the University of Illinois.

But the classroom couldn't contain his talent and creative mind. Henry left Illinois after a year to join an architectural firm in Boston as a draftsman before making the leap to the illustrious New York City firm of McKim, Mead & White, the latter of which had designed the original Madison Square Garden. Henry got his architectural mind honest. His father had moved to Wilmington, in part, to help the Federal government create what became known as "The Rocks," a long jetty completed in 1861 that closed New Inlet near Fort Fisher to stop shoaling in the Cape Fear River and allow safer passage for larger vessels.

By the time the elder Henry was helping rescue the Wilmington region from its natural obstacles, the younger Henry was already well on his way to a career far from the Port City. After two years spent studying Roman and Greek architecture as a scholarship student in Europe, Henry would eventually return to the states just in time to contribute to projects like the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.

He eventually left to start his own partnered firm and later went solo in 1903 for the rest of his career. From an office on Park Avenue, Henry carved out a resume of legendary works, even beyond his memorial to the 16th President. He had a hand in designing monuments to notable American figures like the Marquis de Lafayette (Easton, Pennsylvania), Alexander Hamilton (Washington, D.C.) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Cambridge, Massachusetts). Many of which were collaborations with long-time friend and sculptor David Chester French. The two men also designed and built the DuPont Circle Fountain in D.C. Among Henry's structural feats were the Danforth Memorial Library in Paterson, New Jersey; the Naugatuck, Connecticut train station; the hospital in Waterbury, Connecticut., the Court of the Four Seasons at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915; the World War I Memorial at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut; and the Confederate Memorial in Wil-

ilmington, North Carolina, which he never saw completed before his death. The latter has since been removed.

But Bacon's greatest achievement was and will always be the Lincoln Memorial. His 99-foot-tall monument to the most consequential President in American history was a staggering feat of ingenuity and vision.

The project took years to actually get off the ground, literally. Funding, conceptual designs and actual manpower were all factors in a statue that is unparalleled in its craftsmanship and cultural significance. Henry worked tirelessly on the memorial, which remains one of the most visited sites in the country.

Work officially began in 1912, but it wasn't completed until the early 1920's. Once the building was actually constructed, then the stoic and seated statue of Lincoln was pieced together, followed by nearly a year of road and walkway construction. More than a decade after Henry began working on the tribute to Honest Abe, it was officially dedicated on May 30, 1922. The following year, the one-year anniversary celebration doubled as one of the biggest moments of his career. In a ceremony at Lincoln's feet, he became only the sixth person in history to receive the gold medal from the American Institute of Architects, the organization's highest honor. It was presented to him by then President Warren G. Harding.

Less than a year later, Henry died on February 16, 1924 at the age of 57 following a battle with cancer. He worked up until the day he was hospitalized. Since his death, Bacon has been memorialized through tributes of all shapes and sizes, including the USS Henry Bacon, a Liberty warship built by the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company and launched into the Cape Fear River on November 11, 1942.

Bacon's body and legacy returned home to Wilmington after he passed to be interred in the family plot at Oakdale Cemetery. According to an article in *The State Magazine* (now *Our State Magazine*) from May 1969, his grave marker, which is one of the most popular spots in the cemetery, was designed by his brother Frank and modeled after a tropical flower that he was enchanted with from Egypt. A fittingly eye-catching memorial to a man whose own creations are still awe inspiring today.

## ***BCHS Minutes of May 13, 2024***

The Brunswick County Historical Society meeting was called to order at 7:30 by the President, James Green. There were 8 members and 2 visitors in attendance.

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

The President extended a welcome to all in attendance

The minutes of the February 12, 2024 meeting were printed in the May, 2024 Newsletter. The Acting Secretary reviewed the minutes.

The Treasurer was absent due to ankle surgery. The report was given by the President. The total cash in the bank is \$9,886.17.

The President reminded the members of our website and how to access it. Also, mentioning the various upcoming area events.

There was no unfinished business or new business.

The President mentioned the need for members to step up and agree to be officers.

The program was given by Ann Bokelman, co-founder of the Old Bridge Historical Society at Sunset Beach. She spoke about the Vesta, a blockade runner, which went aground on a sandbar on what is now Sunset Beach.

Motion to adjourn.

Members present: Jimmy Green, Anne Bokelman, Gwen Gausey, Rich Hollenbeck, Glenn Kye, David Bennett, Tammy Cully, Dave Lewis.

Visitors present: Gordon Bokelman, Karen Robbins.

## ***BCHS Website***

The BCHS website continues to grow with new information being added. Check out new genealogy files, maps, video presentation of previous meetings, Newsletters dating back to September 1961, photos, and much more information.

Website statistics for June, 2024 shows a continued increase of average daily views, average daily sessions, average daily visitors, and average daily new visitors. Tell your genealogy friends and history buffs about all the exciting information available on this website.

### **Area Events**

**August 3, 2024:** "Why are North Carolinians known as Tar Heels?" Join Ranger Adam Credle for a special program on the naval stores to be held at the Moores Creek National Battlefield. Time: 11:00am-12:30pm. Free to the public.

**September 28, 2024:** "Carolina Blues: Indigo on the Cape Fear" will be held at the Brunswick Town-Fort Anderson Historical Site. In conjunction with the Southport Maritime Museum they will be exploring the process used by skilled enslaved African labor to extract this valuable dye from the indigo plants. Time: 11:00am-3:00pm and is free to the public.

**October 19, 2024:** "Port Brunswick Day" will be held at the Brunswick Town-Fort Anderson Historical site. Living historians will interpret what life was like in the lower Cape Fear in the fall of 1767. Time: 10:00am-4:00pm and is free to the public.

### ***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](mailto:davelewis@atmc.net)

**CALENDER OF EVENTS**

BCHS Meetings: February 12, 2023

May 13, 2023

August 12, 2023

November 11, 2023

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5152 New Britton LP NW.  
Ash, NC 28420

