



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 & 2024 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



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

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

The February 2024 issue of the *NEWSLETTER* began the 63rd Volume. Volume I, Number 1 was printed September 1961. A complete set of the Newsletter from September 1961 to February 2024 can be found in the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill, NC and at the New Hanover County Public Library North Carolina Room in Wilmington, NC. There were no publications of Volume 17, #3 & 4 (1977) and Volume 18, #1 (1978).

Dues

DUES are now payable unless you are a **Life Member**. The annual dues are \$15.00 for an active member or \$150.00 to become a Life Member. Checks may be mailed to the **BCHS** in care of Bob Armour 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. *You may now pay your dues through PayPal by using our website.*

Program

Our speaker for the next meeting will be Dr. Zephia G. Grissett. Her topic will be on the History of Cedar Grove Baptist Church located in Supply, NC.

A retired educator for the states of North and South Carolina, Dr. Grissett was born April 6, 1951 in Wampee, South Carolina. She is the eldest daughter of three, born to Earlie Lee and Alease Gore (both deceased). She grew up in the Longwood community where she received her Christian Education at home with her par-

ents and at her family church, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

For the first eight years of schooling, she attended the now defunct Longwood Elementary School. During her 9th grade school year, 1965-1966, she was among the students selected from her community to integrate the former all white Shallotte High School. After that year, she enrolled in Union High School, where she graduated Valedictorian of her class in May, 1969.

Dr. Grissett retired from Brunswick County Schools in 2008, with 35 years of service. During her career in Brunswick County, she served as an interim fifth grade teacher, a high school social studies teacher; an Assistant Principal and Principal at both the elementary and middle school levels; Director of Human Resources, and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Upon retirement from Brunswick County Schools, Dr. Grissett worked in Horry County Schools (South Carolina) for six years as a middle school Assistant Principal and later as a district office-based Teacher Evaluator.

She is the wife of Mr. Lynn J. Grissett, Sr. and the mother of Megan Alease, Talya Maude, and Lynn J. Grissett, Jr. She is the proud grandmother of Bria C. Bond, Kaia E. Bond, and Miles Alexander Jones.

Donation to the BCHS

By: Gwen Causey

The Brunswick County Historical Society recently received a generous donation of \$8160.59 from the **FRIENDS OF FORT CASWELL RIFLE RANGE, INC.**

In April, 2023 the **FRIENDS** completed their mission to honor World War I veterans from Brunswick County by reading their names. These Roll Calls ensured that the names of the men and women and their sacrifices would not be forgotten.

On June 17, 2023 the family of Robert Bollie Stanley accepted his Purple Heart, Prisoner of War Medal, the World War I Victory Button and World War I Victory Medal with St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne Battle Clasps and France Service Clasp. The ceremony took place in the Stanley Cemetery, located in Brierwood in Shallotte, which is built on land the Stanley family once owned and farmed.

Another initiative of the **FRIENDS** was the writing and publishing of a book, "Brunswick County in the Great War". Copies of the book were donated to all libraries in the lower Cape Fear region as well as all high schools in Brunswick County.

The **FRIENDS OF FORT CASWELL RIFLE RANGE, INC.** dissolved on August 25, 2023 and gifted their assets to the Brunswick County Historical Society and the Southport Historical Society. Their website will remain active.

The 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range, located on Caswell Beach, is a designated World War I Centennial Memorial.

An Account of the Cape Fear Country 1731

By Hugh Meredith

Editors Note: The following article continued from the November 2023 "Newsletter", describing the new Welsh Tract in North Carolina, appeared in two consecutive issues of The Pennsylvania Gazette, published by Benjamin Franklin. Printed as written.

Thursday, May 6 to Thursday, May 13, 1731.

All the best of the Land on this River I have already, as well as I can, given you an Account of; but there is a pretty deal more of a middling Sort; and yet there can be no great Quantity in any one Piece, Nor yet any great Number of those Spots. The Course of this River, as well as of many other rivers in these Countries, lies near the Sea; and I judge Mr. Evan's Place, fore-mentioned, to be not above 12 or 16 Miles from the main Ocean.

There is another River which falls into the Northwest, on the East Side, about 12 Miles above the Entrance of the Northeast; it is called Black-River from the Duskyess of its Waters: Upon this Branch they say there are some considerable Tracts of very good Land, but it is not well discovered any great way up. The Northwest is the most considerable Branch, as we for the Quantities of the best Land, as for the Clearness of its Stream, the Length of its Course, and the petrifying Quality of its Waters, which turn whole Heaps of Logs and entire Bodies of large Trees into solid Stone: I have seen some Pieces brought from thence, in which the

Grain of the Tree was very plain, even to the Heart, and seem'd to be from young black or Spanish Oak; but they are much too coarse and hard for Hones.

The Banks of this Branch are high; the lowest Land on it, even the Swamps, being 14 or 16 Foot above the common Surface of the Water, and are as rich Land as can be. The good high Land, which hardly ever exceeds two Miles wide from the River, is in general from 30 to 40 Foot above the common Water, but sometimes in the height of the Freshes, there is very little of it dry: These Freshes are soon down off the high Land, but the Water remains some Weeks on the lower Grounds, to their great Detriment who would raise Corn, Cattle, or any thing else. They happen more or less from the latter end of July to the beginning of October, in which Time there are commonly two or three of them. Sometimes they come in March or April, but not so great or mischievous as the others. A Strong North-East Wind, is reckon'd a sure Presage of an approaching Inundation; and the fiercer and more lasting this Wind is, the greater will be the Fresh: As it happened while I was in that Country, when the Water rose, as some affirm'd, 40 Foot perpendicular, but there were none that saw it who did not allow it to be upwards of 30.

There are several considerable Strips of good Land lying near the Sea-shore westward of the Mouth of Clarendon River, quite to the Borders of South Carolina; but all of it lies inconvenient for Water-Carriage, and Land-Carriage to any considerable Distance if almost impracticable throughout the Country, by reason of the multitude of Swamps and wet Savanahs, which cannot be avoided.

The general way of taking up Land here, is to go to a Surveyor, who is empowered to survey and give the Taker-up a Draught or Plot of the same, and his Fees will be about 40s. Or 3 l, a Tract, which contains 640 Acres, and must be settled within two Years after taken up, otherwise it is free for another, who must be at the same Charge; but if it be settled within the Time limited, it May always be held, paying a Quit-rent and Land-Tax. Land may also be purchased by Patent, of some Gentlemen who dispose of it at about 3 l. a Tract of 640 Acres, and no Time limited for the settling it; but this Way of getting Land is generally disapprove'd and seldom practis'd, the Title not being though so good; and People daily expect Persons with Power

from the King to sell Lands on more easy and certain Terms.

Excepting Chesnut Trees, here are all the Kinds you have in Pennsylvania, tho' but very few of Walnut; here are besides, the Cypress, Laurel, Bay red and yellow, Live Oak and Swamp Oak, all Evergreens except the Cypress; with several Sorts whose Names I know Not. Pheasants and Heathens here are none, but all other Fowl common with you are here, Parraquets in the Summer and greater Plenty of Turkeys than ever I saw in Pennsylvania. Here are Foxes, Wolves, Wildcats, Possums, Raccoons, and Panthers always, and Bears sometimes in Plenty; also Plenty of Deer, But Beavers here are none, nor any Ground-Squirrels, tho' Plenty of Grey and Flying Squirrels: Alligators are very numerous here, but not very mischievous; however on their Account Swimming is less practis'd here than in the Northern Provinces.

They have now at Brunswick Quarterly Courts of Common Pleas, and Officers of the Peace, and begin to fall into something like a regular Common-weal: The Inhabitants are mostly such as were born or have lived in the neighboring Colonies; and This would be soon filled with them and others, were the Country less barren, and but tolerably healthful, (which it is far from): for one great Discouragement to settling this Place is now quite removed, to wit, the Indians, who drove away or cut off those who attempted the settling it there several times, first the New-England Men, then the Barbadians, and last my Countryman Thomas James, whose Settlement they plundered and burnt, and murdered him and his Family.

But now there is not an Indian to be seen in this Place; the Senekas (who have always liv'd in Amity with the English) with their tributaries the Susquehanah and Tuskarora Indians, having almost totally destroy'd those called Cape Fear Indians, and the small Remains of them abide among the thickest of the South Carolina Inhabitants; not daring to appear near the out Settlements, for the very Name of a Seneka is terrible to them; as indeed it is to most of these southern Indians: So that I cannot but think both the Carolinas as safe as any of the English Colonies on the Main from any future Indian War.

During the Winter I resided at Black-River in Winyaw, South Carolina, Near 100 Miles West of Brunswick; where we had not a white Frost so hard

as to Kill the Leaves of the Tobacco Suckers in general, till the beginning of November; and the latter Part of that Month, and most of December was much like the Pennsylvania October; and the Latter Part of December and all January even to the second of February, was much such like Weather as is common at Philadelphia, before the Fair, the Ground not frozen two Inches deep, and the People begin to look for Spring as you do in March. Here was neither Snow nor Sleet all Winter, and I believe the Weather has been much the same at Cape Fear.

To conclude, in the Country I have been describing, the cheapest Goods imported are 50 per Cent. Dearer than at Philadelphia, and most things 100 per Cent. dearer, as Rum, Ozenbrigs, etc. Their own Produce is cheap, and there is plenty of Provisions for as many as can settle, but there is not Land enough in the whole Country for as many Inhabitants as are now in Bucks County in Pennsylvania

Editors Note: There were Welsh emigrants from Pennsylvania and Delaware, who settled in the Cape Fear region in the decade 1730-1740, and later. An indication of this settlement is a tract of land still called the Welsh Tract, this designation appearing in the New Hanover county record as early as 1737. It is likely that this was the settlement in which Hugh Meredith was interested. This tract of land being described in detail by Hugh Meredith was transcribed as written and published in the Pennsylvania Gazette in the year 1731.

African-American Leadership in the Menhaden Fishery

Menhaden are an oily little fish also known as "pogie," "mossbunkers" or "fatbacks." A relative of sardines, they are not a food fish, but were used mainly for fertilizer, oil and animal feed. Concentrated in Southport, Morehead City and Beaufort, the menhaden industry was the state's largest commercial fishery for most of the last century. Its fishing boats were also famous for having African-American leadership earlier than any other industry in the South.

Menhaden have been sought after since the colonial times as raw material for fertilizer, oils and

supplements. The Southport menhaden fishery was active most of the year with the autumn months being the peak season as the water cooled along the Cape Fear coast.

Here in North Carolina, the centers of the menhaden industry were Southport, Beaufort, and Morehead City, but menhaden fishing was a thread that connected coastal towns from Maine to Texas. On their waterfronts menhaden boats lined the wharves, and factories processed tens of millions of tons of fish annually in massive quantities of fertilizer and oil. At times the aroma of the fish covered those towns like a blanket. Coastal visitors sometimes complained but to the local workers it was known as "the smell of money".

The fishing equipment consisted of a larger "mother" boat, two purse boats and nets. The purse boats, each laden with one half of the net's length, were deployed from the stern of the mother boat. They would move to opposite sides of the school of fish to form an open U shape around the perimeter. The U was cinched tight by the hardy crewmen, capturing the fish in the "purse." Originally the nets were retrieved by hand with backbreaking work from strong seamen, but later mechanical winches performed the task.

The fish were loaded into the mother boat which, when filled, would rush back to the plant in Southport and offloaded the catch at the Standard Products factory. The mother boats were not equipped with refrigeration and stored the catch in uninsulated fish holes. Boats had to operate close to the landing point to prevent spoilage with most sets occurring within three miles of shore, with the majority of sets being just off the coast of Brunswick County.

Before the days of power blocks and hardening rigs, the captains needed big, strong men in the net. These were real men, working the nets offshore, where most of the fishermen were African-American.

These hard working African-American men would sing to keep their minds off the cold and hurt. Music could be heard all over the ocean while laboring to pull the nets. These song, called a sea shanty, chantey, or chanty were traditional folk songs that was once commonly sung as a work song to accompany rhythmical labor aboard large merchant sailing vessels. The term *shanty* most accurately refers to a specific style of work song

belonging to this historical repertoire.

Beyond the shanty's gospel strains or the raunchy, sassy lyrics, because they sang both kinds of songs, you could hear something more: Their fierce sense of brotherhood, a feeling of family, their children's tears when they went away, their wives and girlfriends' hugs when they came home, the storms that nearly took their lives, the cold ropes that cut their hands to the bone, the pride that they took in their work, and the joy they found in the beauty on the water that God had created.

John Mallette, a present day commercial fisherman from Onslow County, once said, "We're all familiar with the image; the lone, white fisherman donning a yellow slicker. Think *Gorton's Seafood, Trusted since 1849*. "For some reason, that image is so etched in people's minds, but what that hides is a lot of diversity in this fishery, in any fishery, particularly when you get to the processing sector, the packing, the trucking, the retail markets and then, of course cooking," said Barbara Garrity-Blake, Duke University Marine Lab cultural anthropologist. "But there are also African-Americans who are commercial fishermen, there's more than meets the eye." Personal experiences and stories from those who it highlights just how much fishing, from catching fish to cooking and eating is intricately woven into the cultural fabric of Black communities.

The menhaden fishery was at one time the largest employer of African-Americans in the mid-Atlantic region. While many were working in the fish factories, Blacks also made up the majority of the crew members and to some extent captains on many vessels. One such Captain was Eugene W. Gore from Southport. Born in 1916 Captain Gore worked his way up from kitchen boy to become one of the first African-American captains in the menhaden fishing fleet of North Carolina.

In his own word, Captain Gore recalls another era, when local people celebrated his boat's arrival in port and referred to the fish factories' rank odor as "the smell of money".

As a young boy I liked to go out on the boat more or less to eat and help out my granddaddy. He was a cook on a menhaden vessel. As long as I was young enough to stay I the kitchen, I liked it. But if a captain is short a man and a boy was out on the boat, he'd tell him to get in the net. The first time I looked at all that net I said that's too

much net for men to have to pull back by hand. The more I pulled it, the more determined I was not to pull that net all my life.

The menhaden business was the only industry that they had here. During that time you go fishing or you go work on somebody's farm. Big muscles and strong backs, them are the kind of men they hired. Of course you couldn't go out there with a boatload of green men. Somebody was liable to get killed.

Before I was a captain I was a mate. The first time I got some experience as a mate was in 1950 or '51. The mate, he's in one of the purse boats that go catch the fish. You got a mate in one and a captain in one, half of the men in this one and half in that one. You drop off and leave the big boat there drifting. You go around the fish and meet way over there, and when you got the net closed up under them you pull and pull and pull.

We're talking about a mess of fish. If they show that color on the water like a great big red spot, and if it's got any kind of size, I tell you what, hold o. Shooo. You load those old wooden boats down with pogie and then fill the decks up and water be running across the desk back and forth across the boat.

I carried a crew from Morehead, some of them from Beaufort, but most of them from right here in Brunswick County. But when men would leave and go home 'cause they weren't making any money, then people come stand around the dock, maybe some from Angola Prison and everywhere else. Some of them were nice people. Some of them were kind of rough.

Oh, I have seen some rough weather, but the only time I really worried about the crew is when the Dewey caught afire. She burnt with me in the Gulf of Mexico right off the Calcasieu River. It was in 1956. She had one of those old donkey engines in the back that got afire and you couldn't put it out. I got them to lower the purse boats down and get in.

The boss man, he told me I done right. He said, you didn't lose a man? I said, no sir. He said we can build another boat, but it takes 21 years to build a man.

He's the guy who give me a chance to be a captain. You know, God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform. I don't care how bad a group you get in, there's somebody in there

that sympathizes with black people. I know that from experience. He called me at home one day. He said, Gene, I want you to go captain the Dewey. I said, whoo, I don't know. He said, I already talked with Gordon - - he meant my captain. He said he hated to see you leave him, but he said he'd be less than a man to hold you back.

A black man as a captain in 1953, '54, that was a high position. A black man in charge of 20, 30 head of men. See, there's one thing the white man learned. He learned to look at money. He ain't going to get the Rotary Club people to do that hard work, is he? You didn't see no white men way back yonder in that net. The only white men on that boat were the captain and the engineer and the pilot. And see, if you get a black mate, that's going to get you a crew, and you got to have the crew to make the money.

Let me tell you a story about what it was like out there. In the fall of '58 it looked like we were going to have a bad season. Nobody hadn't had no fish that fall. The spotter plane would fly way up to the Chesapeake Bay and back and not see anything. The fleet would run up as far as Wimple Shoal buoy up on the other side of Ocracoke, then turn around, head back south to Beaufort.

One day I turned around there and all of them fast boats were way ahead of me. See, my old boat, The Simpson Brothers, was slower than a lot of the boats.

Well, that evening, them fish popped up! Them big roe pogies! The plane man said, Oh Lord, that's all you want right here! He said the Simpson Brothers and one other boat are the only two boats that can get back there before night and get a set. Boy, the rest of them captains were going crazy on the radio!

Oh man, I had 'em on her. Made one set, boy. It was breezing up northeast and fogging up when I passed Hatteras light. I was in the deep, and she had a big hole in her too - - she was a wet boat. But I got her into Beaufort. I was the first one to carry in a load of the fish that season. That's when it paid to have a slow boat.

Editors Note: Eugene Willard Gore was born December 28, 1916 in Southport and died March 11, 2013 and is buried in the Northwood Cemetery in Southport, North Carolina. He was the son of Carrie Joyner Gore before her marriage to Walter Gore. His father is said to be William Herbert

Stanley, but he took the Gore surname. He was married to Lois Mae Jackson, and they had three children.

Sources: "Listening to History," by David Cecelski. "Black Carolinians in Fishing Industry," by Trista Talton for the CoastalReview.org. "Southport's Fantastic Fishery," by Robert Rehder for the Wrightsville Beach Magazine. "Sea Shanty," Wikipedia

Minutes

Brunswick County Historical Society
Brunswick Electric Membership Cooperation
November 13, 2023

The Brunswick County Historical Society meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by the President, James Green. There were 11 members in attendance.

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

The minutes of the August 14, 2023 meeting were printed in the November, 2023 Newsletter. The Acting Secretary reviewed the minutes and commented on the two motions. The officers sent a letter about the rising cost of printing the Newsletter and then sending them by postal mail to every member. Forty-eight members chose to have their Newsletter sent by E-mail. Eight members will receive their Newsletter by postal mail. These eight paid \$10 for this service. The Newsletter is being sent to five libraries, one historic site and one historical society. Also, the membership list was purged of those that have not paid dues in the past five years. The current membership is fifty-three. Of these, thirty are Life members.

The Treasurer reported a bank balance of \$9,556.79. The Society was a recipient of a donation of \$8,160.59 from the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, Inc. upon their dissolution. The report is attached to the minutes.

The President read correspondence from three persons requesting information about the CCC camp in the Green Swamp, historical buildings and the need for a speaker at a senior center.

The program was given by Mary Ellen Watts Poole, a Southport, NC native. She spoke on "Southport's History Brick by Brick." She told the story of Kate Stuart, Jessie Stevens Taylor, Southport Woman's Club, Anna Miller Davis, Joy Ar-

nold Gregory, Annie A. Clemmons, Captain Hulan, and Annie Mae Watts, Bobby Jones, John A. Connell, and Joshua Potts.

Motion to adjourn.

Members present: Jimmy Green, David Holden, Bob Armour, Yvonne Brown, Carol Jutte, Judy Holden, Glenn Kye, Gwen Causey, Meg Shelton, Dave Lewis, Rick Hollembeak.

Gwen Causey, Acting Secretary

BCHS Website

The BCCHS's new website was launched in August of 2021 and has been growing with visitors and Brunswick County information. The average daily page views for the last 12 months was 12.5 and with a 3.0 average number of daily new visitors.

Charles Clemmons has done a tremendous developing and maintaining the website. Continue visiting and tell your genealogy and history friends about the new features, historical facts and photos of our county. The genealogy collection now has gen files on the Edwards, Hewett, Lancaster, Lewis, Floyd, and Clemmons families of Brunswick County with more to come. Email contacts for more information is also available.

www.brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org

Area Events

February 9, 2024: Annie Clemmons: Southport's Secret Suffragist, a one-act play presented by the Southport Historical Society. Ms. Carolyn Evans portrays Annie Clemmons, a Southport woman who believed in the power of the vote. Time: 6 pm at the Southport Community Building.

February 17, 2024: Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson Living History, **The 159th Anniversary of the Fall of Fort Anderson**. Experience artillery firings and infantry demonstrations, Free. Time: 10 am-4 pm.

February 24&25, 2024: Moores Creek National Battlefield will be commemorating the 248th Anniversary of the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge. Park staff, park volunteers, and other living historians will be offering a variety of programs and demonstrations throughout the weekend. **Time:** Opens at 9:00 am and runs for six hours.

February 28-March 2, 2024: The NC Rice Festival, attracting families, history enthusiasts, educators, tourists, and residents to learn about the Brunswick County region's rich rice-farming history. Celebrating the enduring vibrancy of Gullah Geehee culture in coastal North Carolina. Four days, four events, and four locations. Search the NC Rice Festival website to obtain more details.

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 12, 2023

May 13, 2023

August 12, 2023

November 11, 2023

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
5152 New Britton LP NW.
Ash, NC 28420

