



# 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)



## FEBRUARY MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC FEBRUARY 10, 2025 at 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the *Brunswick County Historical Society* will be held on Monday, February 10th, 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).

## 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 February meeting will be Mr. J.D. Lewis and his topic will be "The Revolutionary War in Our Neck of the Woods."

J.D. Lewis grew up in North Carolina, left home at eighteen

seeking fame and fortune (found neither), lived all over America, and returned to the South Carolina lowcountry in 1991. His work expertise is primarily large-scale Program Management in five major industries - Nuclear Power, Petro-Chemical, Information Technology, Mobile Telecommunications, and Aerospace & Defense. He had his own management consulting firm for 30 years with clients that included Boeing, Lockheed-Martin, Northrop-Grumman, Orbital Sciences, BellSouth, and many others.

Using his interest in history, Mr. Lewis has published an extensive website about the early history of North Carolina and South Carolina including a genealogy research of his Lewis family line, over 30,000 WebPages, thousands of maps, hundreds of transcribed documents, and hundreds of historical write-up on specific topics. His research into the American Revolution in NC and SC spanned more than eight years, included thousands of primary sources, specifically Federal Pension Applications and contemporary letters and documents, and also included hundreds of secondary sources such as books, articles, maps, etc. This website, including all information on the Revolutionary War in NC and SC is 100% free to the public with zero advertising.

Mr. Lewis has also published a three-volume set of books: "NC Patriots 1775-1783: Their Own Words" in 2012. He has also given detailed presentations of this research at several Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution events in South Carolina and at the Cape Fear Revolutionary War Round Table in Wilmington, NC.

## Wilmington Massacre

*Editors Note: By the late 1890's, Wilmington was a shining example of a mixed-race community but North Carolina and states across the South were working to reverse the advances made by black citizens. A full and accurate account of the events of November 10, 1898 may never be possible and space in this Newsletter prevents a detailed description of what is known about the events leading up to, during, and the decades after. What follows are just highlights of the cause and aftermath of an Insurrection of the Wilmington local Government. More details and a final account may be found through various written publica-*

*tions and books.*

The Wilmington Insurrection of 1898, also known as the Wilmington massacre of 1898 or the Wilmington Coup of 1898 was a municipal-level "coup d'état" and a massacre that was carried out by white supremacists on Thursday, November 10, 1898. The white press in Wilmington originally described the event as a "race riot perpetrated by a mob of black people." In later study, the event has been characterized as a violent overthrow of a duly elected government by white supremacists.

The white Southern Democrats conspired and led a mob of approximately 2,000 white men to overthrow the legitimately elected Fusionist biracial government in Wilmington. They expelled opposition black and white political leaders from the city, destroyed the property and businesses of black citizens built up since the American Civil War, including the only black newspaper in the city, and killed an estimated 60 to more than 300 people.

The Wilmington Coup is considered a turning point in post-Reconstruction North Carolina politics. It was part of an era of more severe racial segregation and effective disenfranchisement of African Americans throughout the South, which had been underway since the passage of a new constitution in Mississippi in 1890 that raised barriers to the registration of black voters. Other states soon passed similar laws. Historian Laura Edwards writes, "What happened in Wilmington became an affirmation of white supremacy not just in that one city, but in the South and in the nation as a whole," as it affirmed that invoking "whiteness" eclipsed the legal citizenship, individual rights, and equal protection under the law that black Americans were guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment.

In 1860 Wilmington was the largest city in North Carolina, with a population of nearly 10,000, of which a majority was African American. Numerous slaves and freedmen worked at the city's port, in households as domestic servants, and in a variety of jobs as artisans and skilled workers.

With the end of the war in 1865, freedmen who lived in many states left plantations and rural areas and moved to towns and cities to seek work, but also to gain safety by creating black communities without white supervision. Tensions grew in Wilmington and other areas because of a shortage of supplies; Confederate currency suddenly had no value and the South was impoverished following

the end of the long war.

In 1868, North Carolina ratified the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, resulting in the recognition of Reconstruction policies. The state legislature and governorship were dominated by Republican officials, with the governor a white man and the legislature made up of both white and black people. Freedmen were eager to vote and overwhelmingly supported the Republican Party that had emancipated them and given them citizenship and suffrage. However, conservative white Democrats greatly resented this “radical” change, which they deemed as being brought about by black residents, Unionist “carpetbaggers”, and race traitors referred to as “scalawags.” Democrats regained control of the state legislature in 1870 and began chipping away at the Republican rule.

In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wilmington was still the largest city in the state and continued to have a majority-black population. There were numerous black professionals and businessmen among them and a rising middle class. Blacks held a significant economic power in the city and the Republican Party of Wilmington was biracial in membership. African Americans were elected to local office and gained prominent positions in the community.

The dynamics of the Democrat rule began to decline in the 1894 and 1896 state elections in which the Republican-Populist Fusion ticket won every statewide office including the governorship won by Daniel L. Russell. The Fusionist began dismantling the Democrats political infrastructure, namely by reverting their appointed positions in local offices back to offices subject to popular elections. They also encouraged black citizens to vote. By 1898, Wilmington’s key political power was in the hands of “The Big Four”, who were representative of the Fusion (Republican) ticket: the mayor, Dr. Silas P. Wright; the acting sheriff, George Zadoc French; the postmaster, W.H. Chadbourne; and businessman, Flaviel W. Fosters.

As black people in the area rapidly emerged into their newfound social status and progressed economically, socially, and politically, racial tensions grew. The Democrats were preparing for the 1898 elections and Furnifold Simmons, newly elected Democratic State Party Chairman, was tasked with developing a strategy for the campaign. With seats in the North Carolina U.S. House of Representa-

tives and seats in the state Senate were up for grabs, Simmons knew that Wilmington and New Hanover County were going to be important in these fights.

Simmons began to build a campaign around the issue of white supremacy knowing that this issue would overwhelm all other issues. He summarized the party’s platform when he stated: “North Carolina is a white man’s state and white men will rule it and they will crush the party of Negro domination beneath a majority so overwhelming that no other party will ever dare to attempt to establish Negro rule here.” The election of 1898 turned out to be the meanest, vilest, dirtiest campaign since 1876.

Josephus Daniels, editor for the Raleigh News & Observer newspaper, was using Wilmington as a symbol of “Negro domination” because its government was biracial, ignoring the fact that it was dominated by a two-thirds white majority. Many newspapers published pictures and stories implying that African American men were sexually attacking white women in the city. This belief was further fueled with a speech on August 11, 1897 by Rebecca Latimer Felton, a prominent women’s suffragist from Georgia, claiming that “of all the threats farm wives face, none was greater than ‘the black rapist’ due to the failure of white men to protect them,” and she further said “that in order to restore that protection, white men should resort to vigilante justice.”

In response to Felton’s speech and the danger it imposed upon black men, Alexander Manly, editor of Wilmington’s black owned “The Wilmington Daily Record” newspaper, wrote an editorial refuting Felton’s speech and asserting that some white women have consensual sex with black men. Fearing that the editorial would provoke backlash Wilmington Republicans urged Manly to suspend the paper and not publish the editorial. However, Manly did publish the newspaper with his editorial and within 48 hours, white supremacists, aided by newspapers across the South were using Manly’s words, which they had distorted, as a championing catalyst for their cause.

Prior to this editorial, The Daily Record had been considered “a very creditable colored paper” throughout the state. However, after the editorial the newspapers income was severely crippled with the withdrawal of white advertisers. Manly al-

though fearing for his safety was still trying to keep his paper solvent. This one editorial was later called “the determining factor” of the coup of November 10, 1898.

Most Wilmington and New Hanover County blacks and many Republicans did not vote in the November 8, 1898 due to the atmosphere of violence. All roads leading in and out of Wilmington were blocked and voters were kept away from the polls with gunfire. The election was won by the Democrats in what was later found to be a fraudulently election with the Republican votes being replaced with Democrat ballots.

With Democrats back in control of state politics white supremacists began to make plans to take over Wilmington’s biracial city government. The morning of November 10, a gathering of 500 armed white businessmen and war veterans marched to the office of The Daily Record. They broke into the building vandalizing the premises and then set the building on fire. This action led to more violence during the day toward black men and businesses. Another group was led to disband and drive out the elected government of the city.

Patrols of armed vigilantes spread out over the city and shooting continued until nightfall. Hundreds of black people fled the town to take shelter in nearby swamps. The number of black people killed by the mob is uncertain with estimates between 20 to over 300. An additional 50 men, both black and white, were banished and ordered by the mob to leave town.

The coup was deemed a success for the business elite by The Charlotte Observer. Some African Americans sought redress for the attacks at the federal level. City residents’ appeals to President William McKinley for help to recover from the widespread destruction in the Brooklyn area of Wilmington received no response; the White House said it would not respond without a request from the governor and Governor Russell had not requested any help.

On January 6, 1899, a suffrage bill was introduced in Raleigh to keep blacks from voting. A special committee was formed to try and circumvent the U.S. Constitution which, in fact, granted blacks the right to vote. The legislature passed a law requiring new voters to pay a poll tax, and passed a state constitutional amendment requiring prospective voters to demonstrate that they could

read and write a section of the Constitution. Practices that discriminated against poor whites and more than 50,000 black men.

After the coup, the Democrats began to pass the state’s first racial hierarchy laws designed to separate blacks and whites thus ushering in the “Jim Crow” era lasting until the 1960’s. In early 1900’s, Democrats in other southern states began following North Carolina’s example by suppressing the black vote through disenfranchisement laws or constitutional amendments of their own. The Wilmington Insurrection of 1898 had lasting effects in southern politics for almost 100 years. By the early 1990’s, different groups in the city of Wilmington told and understood different histories of the events sparking interest to discuss and commemorate the coup.

It wasn’t until the year 2000 that the state legislature recognized that the black community had suffered severely both politically and economically following the coup, especially due to state disenfranchisement and Jim Crow. The state legislature created the 13-member, biracial, 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission to develop a historical record of the event and to assess the economic impact of the riot on blacks locally and across the region and state. The Commission studied the riot for nearly six years before producing a lengthy report on the event finding that the violence was a “part of a statewide effort to put white supremacist Democrats in office and stem the political advances of black citizens.” Harper Peterson, former mayor of Wilmington and a member of the commission said, “Essentially, it crippled a segment of our population that hasn’t recovered in 107 years.”

**Sources:** “*The Wilmington Lie*,” by David Zucchini: “*Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*.” “*1898 Wilmington Race Riot Report*,” [www.digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/1898-wilmington-race-riot-report/2257408](http://www.digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/1898-wilmington-race-riot-report/2257408). “*The North Carolina Election of 1898...*” UNC Chapel Hill Library.

## **Who Was The Mysterious Rider of Battle Royal?**

**Source:** First published in the “*Featurette*,” February 1935 and reprinted in the BCHS “*Newsletter*” in August 1978. As written. Author unknown.

Nobody seems to know who the mysterious rider was for sure, but since he rode a black charger and frequented the Battle Royal section about three miles southeast of Maco in Brunswick County, it but seems plausible, from other skits of Revolutionary history, that he was none other than the man called Manly in the skirmish of Hook Creek bridge in the northwest section of Brunswick.

After searching diligently through four or five North Carolina histories without finding any mention of “Battle Royal” (frequently called “Battarile”) we have had to glean bits of legend here and there in order to place this story together, and in passing we want to thank Jethro Benton, Herbert Scull, and others for bits of information handed down to them which they passed on to us.

Since descriptions and historical incidents seem to point a finger toward Manly as the daring rider of the huge and very swift black horse, we will at least call the mysterious rider “Manly” until we become better informed, though we have no desire to take the military glory of one man and give it to another.

But this fellow Manly had a habit of riding off from the Whig encampments to act as a lure to Tories scattered about or congregated at sundry places. Frequently he went about looking like a “sitting duck” – like an easy target for any Tory firing piece. If he felt his age, though, he never showed it in a crisis. Many a Tory eye spied him and mistook him for just an old ragged looking man who happened to be riding a mighty fine looking horse. The horse looked much more important than the man on his back. It might be well to dart out of hiding and take the man. Who could tell? Maybe the old man knew where some Whigs might be encamped. If he was friendly to the Tories he wouldn’t mind telling, and if he acted hostile it wouldn’t be any harm to take that nice looking horse from him.

And as the lure was working. Almost daily a band of Tories would dart from hiding, sometimes firing a warning shot to make the old man stop. Manly would stop and look around as if hard of hearing, as if unable to locate the direction of the shot. Sometimes this made the Tories laugh as they darted from the cover of green foliage, for Manly could act as well as ride. When he saw the Tories coming and they got close enough that he was sure they were Tories, he would start rocking back and

forth and pulling at the reins with sporadic jerks like an old man frightened and trying to get his horse started. He did this as something of a safeguard against drawing fire from the pursuing enemy, and to help keep his detection. If he got off to a slow start Tories to a man would decide to ride him down.

However, this huge black steed which Manly rode was one of the swiftest chargers that ever ran in the sunny south. She seemed to sense Manly’s purpose and at the right moment, when he set spurs to her flanks, she darted forward so swiftly that on many occasions Manly would have to slow her down, otherwise the enemy might get suspicious and start firing to kill, or reluctantly give up the chase, seeing that they were left hopelessly behind.

Manly didn’t want them to get discouraged once he had them after him, for somewhere down the winding old cart road there was ever a band of sharp-shooting Whigs strung out to slaughter whoever offered chase after Manly and his black charger. It thrilled them to see Manly coming, his big horse in a gallop with a cloud of dust stirred up by enemy riders behind him. The hidden Whigs would let Manly ride by, and then suddenly open fire on the enemy horsemen who followed.

This bit of strategy was working right along and news wasn’t spreading much about it due to the fact that no pursuer escaped to bear the facts back to others of their fellows. But the fact that small bands kept riding away and not coming back aroused suspicion. And so this legend goes that a large band of redcoats and Tories strung out to see what was what, and with orders to shoot to kill anyone who came along unrecognized.

But on this specific day Manly and his black horse were living a very charmed life. The very first man that he came abreast of sent a musket ball whining dangerously close to Manly’s head. He knew that was not intended for a simple warning shot, the man behind the gun was firing with intent to kill. Manly set spurs to his charger immediately, and the huge black horse lunged forward just as several muskets fired. The balls swished just back of Manly and he believed his horse’s sudden lunge had jerked him out of the path of certain death. He was deeply attached to his horse and feared for her safety as much as he feared for his own. He hoped that all had taken a pot shot at him. If so, he could get out of reach before the muskets could be re-

loaded.

With his steed in full flight, he dared to look back. Men were running from the woods to the road behind him. Some came on horses. These would undoubtedly chase him. He was beginning to half hope that they would when suddenly he saw enemy horsemen emerge from a thicket ahead to cut off his escape. He saw that his forward advance was blocked. He stopped and looked back. A cloud of dust. Those behind were riding hard to get him. Muskets began firing from either side of the road. Manly couldn't sit still to make up his mind what to do. He began trotting his steed around in circles. Since he knew every deer path in that section he might save his own life by dismounting and running for it into the woods. But he didn't want to lose his horse. A decision, though, had to be reached, for horsemen were advancing toward him from east and west, all getting close, to close that firing had ceased because of the danger of one group shooting friends in the other group.

Manly took advantage on this. He stopped his steed from running around and sat for a few seconds stoically in his saddle. It must have looked to the enemy as if Manly was ready to surrender, but with fearless dignity. Some of them, however, had drawn their swords and looked determined to run him through as soon as they came within reach of him. He saw that both bands of horsemen would reach him about the same time.

By this time Manly had his mind made up. As the riders began checking their horses and were coming to jolts, Manly set spurs to his steed and the big horse lunged forward toward the woods and toward four or five footmen who were emerging from the green. Some of the footmen pointed their muskets at Manly, but didn't fire. Either they had emptied their guns in vain shots earlier, or were afraid of shooting those on horseback immediately behind Manly.

Manly led those on horses a merry chase into a thicket of small pines. Then he stopped abruptly and turned his horse. He skirted through the edge of a bay and then cut right back through the pine thicket to the road. The fleet-footed steed Manly was on ran like a racehorse even though the woods, leaving the enemy horsemen gasping in surprise and milling around in the sapling thicket wondering what had become of Manly.

Musket firing brought them out of the thicket

back into the old cart-road. Then they lit out after Manly who was in full flight toward his comrades who were in hiding to do slaughter as soon as the enemy came in sight. But this time there was an overwhelming number of the enemy. And the enemy, suspecting a trap after riding into the first volley of shots dismounted.

Then it was truly a "Battle Royal," every man for himself.

There is a branch in the Battle Royal (or Batarile) section which is commonly called "Jump an' Run" branch. So named because men scattered into the green bushes like partridges, and ever so often somebody, being sorely oppressed, would jump and run. We are unable to tell how this battle came out, but according to legend the mysterious horseman and his horse escaped injury and both lived to deceive and harass the Tories and Redcoats until the British sailed away from American shores.

## **True Ghost Story of Mt. Misery Road**

With a name like Mt. Misery one would think there has to be some kind of story behind it. As it turns out, you'd be right, and the story is just as dark as the name might suggest.

The long and winding Mount Misery Road starts off U.S. 74 and 76 near Leland, passes by Navassa and runs through rural Brunswick County before coming to an end at the town of Northwest. The name Mount Misery first appears on a map by the cartographer John Collet in 1770, and can be found on maps through the early 1800's. A ferry across the Cape Fear River operated there in the 1700's.

Originally there was a sandhill called Mount Misery. At some point, and it is unclear when or why, the 25 foot sandhill ceased to exist, at least not in as prominent a form as it had in the past. This piece of land was very difficult to cultivate which may have contributed to the name. But, this is but one theory. Another sad theory leads to a ghost story with a dark past. This one has enslaved Africans being taken off boats near Mount Misery.

Mt. Misery Road is right beside the Cape Fear River running between Wilmington and Fayetteville, North Carolina. This road used to be the path new slaves took as they were walking the ninety miles to the Slave Market in Fayetteville. If a slave was slow or sick from the long sea voyage they had

just finished across the ocean they were killed and thrown in the woods along the way. It is the ghost of those slaves that are seen by people as they drive along Mt. Misery Road. Many people tell of seeing black people in strange cloths either in the road or standing beside it. People have also claimed to hear people singing in strange languages. Lights are also seen in the woods along the road but no one can ever find the source of those lights.

Over the years there have been many people who have seen the ghosts and people also claim to feel like something is watching them along the road there. Some people including ghost hunters claim it was all the tragedy that occurred in the area that makes people feel the way that they do about the area. Most ghost hunters who have visited the area claim it is a hot bed of paranormal activity. As Christy Judah said in her book, *The Legends of Brunswick County*, "The name says it all. More than one miserable event has occurred at this location."

*Sources: "Carolina's Unknown," exploring paranormal phenomena in North and South Carolina. Featured in various magazines, radio, and television programs. "Wilmington StarNews," January 25, 2022, written by John Staton. "The Legends of Brunswick County," by J.C. Judah.*

### Area Events

**February 15, 2025: The 160th Anniversary of the Fall of Fort Anderson.** 10:00am-3:00pm. Ex-

perience artillery firings and infantry demonstrations at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. Admission is free. Also on same date, ***Plunging Shot and Screaming Shell: A Nighttime Bombardment.*** 6:00-7:00pm. Realistic reenactment of the bombardment and evacuation of the Fort. Admission \$10.00 for ages 16 and up. Children 15 and under are admitted FREE.

**February 22-23, 2025: 249th Anniversary of Battle of Moores Creek Bridge.** From 10:00am to 4:00pm each day you can tour battlefield encampments, watch historic weapons demonstrations, explore a variety of colonial demonstrations, and attend interpretive demonstration of the battle as it unfolds. Event is FREE.

**March 8, 2025: North Carolina Rice Festival at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson Historic Site.** 10:00am-5:00pm. Activities will include history/cultural presentations, tours, demonstrations, live entertainment for family fun. Also, Gullah Geechee food vendors, and arts/crafts. Admission is FREE.

**April 12, 2025: America 250th: Women of Brunswick at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site.** 10:00am-4:00am. Get a chance to see what life was like and dive into a new perspective of Port Brunswick. Event is FREE for all ages.

**April 19, 2025: 18th Century Easter Litany at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson Historic Site.** 6:45am-7:15am. Visitors will be welcomed into the site starting at 9:15am for a sunrise service beginning at 6:45am. Rain or shine. Seating will not be provided but you are welcome to bring your own chair. Admission is FREE.

### ***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)

BCHS Meetings: February 10, 2025  
May 12, 2025  
August 11, 2025  
November 10, 2025

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