



NEWSLETTER

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

VOLUME LXV

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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
Acting Secretary: Gwen Causey
Treasurer: Bob Armour
Director: Dave Lewis

Newsletter Editor: Dave Lewis
Webmaster: Charles Clemmons
brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org



AUGUST MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC AUGUST 10, 2026 at 7:30 P.M.

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

August Meeting Details

The August meeting will not have a presenter but will instead be a business meeting of officers, members and anyone with interest in preserving the Brunswick County Historical Society. Please read the February meeting minutes and the addendum to the minutes to further understand our needs.

Minutes

**Brunswick County Historical Society
February 9, 2026**

The Brunswick County Historical Society meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by the President, James Green. There were 9 members and 4 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 President thanked Dave Lewis for another excellent Newsletter.

The November 10, 2025 minutes were reviewed by the Secretary.

The Treasurer reported a bank balance of \$. (Note: Later balance of \$8960.50 was added on April 17).

The President announced the following events at BrunswickTown State Historic Site: Dancing in Defiance, February 21; Rice Festival, March 4; Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, April 25; Women in Brunswick, May 2. Also, March 27 Marker Dedication by BrunswickTown DAR Chapter at the Courthouse. April 25 Old Bridge Historical Society Strawberry and Wine Festival at the park in Sunset Beach, NC.

There was no unfinished business.

Under new business the President spoke about the Society needing new leadership and asked those present to be willing to serve as an officer. Extensive discussion followed with several members offering their opinion and suggestions.

A motion by Gwen Causey that we take a break from in-person meeting (May and August). At the August meeting the Society Officers will meet and reconsider the future of the Society. Seconded by Dave Lewis. Unanimous vote to approve.

Members are encouraged to attend the August meeting to give their suggestions and ideas related to the Society.

The program was given by Brett Riggs. He spoke of the early history of Brunswick County as a place people should avoid or pass through despite the best efforts to survive.

Motion to adjourn.

Members Present: Jimmy Green, Gloria Sullivan, Gwen Causey, Richard Hollenbeck, Dave Lewis, Ann Bokelman, Judy Holden, Yvonne Brown David Holden.

Visitors Present: Brett Riggs, Kimberly Riggs, Samuel Riggs, Victor Guarino.

Gwen Causey, Acting Secretary.

Addendum to the Minutes

As a result of the motion by Gwen Causey, the May, 2026 meeting is cancelled and the August, 2026 meeting will be held at the scheduled time. The officers will be prepared to discuss the issues and to hear from those members who are present. All members are invited to attend and brainstorm with the Officers.

Items to be discussed include:

1. New Officers
2. Change of meeting day and time
3. Newsletter
4. Storage of old minute books
5. Website
6. Social Media to include Facebook, instagram, Youtube, etc.
7. Need for pictures and stories for the website
8. Financial records to include bank balance

The First Hurricane Helene

Sixty-six years to the day before the winds and rain from Hurricane Helene caused devastating flooding in the mountains of North Carolina on September 27, 2024, there was another powerful Hurricane Helene that raked the coast of North Carolina on September 27, 1958. Although the storm never made an official landfall, she produced exceptionally strong winds on land including a 135 mph gust at the Wilmington airport, the strongest ever measured at this location. Helene's offshore track is the only factor that spared the area from catastrophic damage rivaling or even exceeding that experience just four years earlier during Hurricane Hazel's landfall. Due to early warnings and mandatory evacuation of coastal islands, Helene caused no direct fatalities and only one serious injury in the Carolinas.

Hurricane Helene was the most intense tropical cyclone of the 1958 Atlantic hurricane season. The eighth tropical storm and the fourth hurricane of the year, Helene was formed from a tropical wave east of the Lesser Antilles. Moving steadily westward the storm slowly intensified, attaining hurricane strength on September 26. Nearing the United States East Coast, the hurricane quickly attained Category 4 intensity on September 26, before it subsequently reached its peak intensity with maxi-

mum sustained winds of 150 mph and minimum barometric pressure of 930 mbar. On Saturday, September 27, the intense hurricane came within 10 miles of the Cape Fear region before recurving out to sea.

Brunswick County's electrical, municipal water supply, and phone lines were damaged or knocked out altogether by the terrific storm. A newspaper interview with Southport resident W. F. Huffam suggested "about 90 percent of the homes in Southport were damaged to some extent..." The steeple on St. James Methodist Church was toppled and the building sustained severe damage. Pleasant Oaks Plantation, a former rice plantation location along NC 133 in eastern Brunswick County was severely damaged. Newspaper reports indicated 400 trees were blown down, including 100 Live Oaks up to six feet in diameter. The damage was much worse than what occurred during Hurricane Hazel and was so extensive it was expected to take years before the gardens would reopen to the public.

Sand dunes at Long Beach were breached and the storm surge damaged some roads. Ocean Isle Beach's 300 foot long fishing pier was "smashed" according to an Associated Press newspaper article on September 29. Yaupon Beach roofs were blown off two homes, but damage was otherwise minor. On October 1 Brunswick County officials estimated damage across the county at \$2.34 million, a small sum in comparison with today's dollar.

According to a State Port Pilot article written on June 14, 1958 one local business was hit exceptionally hard. Danford Dairy Farm located on Danford Road in Bolivia lost 53 of their cows on September 28, 1958. Friends of the Danford family urged them to quit the dairy business. It was an understandable attitude for friends to take as the Danfords seemed marked for disaster.

The article reads in 1954 another hurricane destroyed Ephraim Danford's apartment house at a nearby beach, cutting away the semi-invalid's main source of income. Again in 1957 the family lost 50 cows to Bang's Disease, a highly contagious bacterial infection affecting livestock and wildlife.

Friends pitched in to help the Danfords after Hurricane Helene. Three thousands tons of hay had to be hauled out of the barn loft that had crushed the herd of milking Holsteins. Fifty-one cows had to be buried in a quickly-dug ditch on the farm. The other two were sold for dog food at \$30 each.

These things were done in short order, but the main task remained of getting the Danfords back in business.

"We were \$50,000 in debt," says Ephraim's son, Hugh, now 30 years old. There was \$2,300 insurance on the barn. The community raised \$2,500 more with a tremendous barbecue supper. Claude Gore of Shallotte gave the family a cow, and so did the Sealtest folks in Wilmington.

The barbecue money paid for six good milk cows. With the 30 to 40 dry cows that were in the woods when the hurricane struck, the family had the foundation of a new herd. Before long the dry cows freshened, and "it was the only thing that saved us," said Hugh Danford. Hugh and his brother, Travis (four years his elder), got an estimate of \$1,900 on raising the barn loft.

That may have been the real turning point for the Danfords, for what Hugh and Travis did was in the spirit of their senior high and Army days. Using crossties and hydraulic jacks, the brothers were able to raise the loft back in place themselves in 54 hours.

"I remember how Hugh worked his senior year in high school," said A. S. Knowles, farm agent in Brunswick County at that time. "He would come home right after school and take over the tractor his mother had been driving all day. And he'd work until three or four the next morning."

Hugh was able to get himself assigned to the paratroopers at Fort Bragg so he could be near home. "I told them I'd jump out backwards if they'd transfer me near home," he said with a grin.

After ending his Army day at 4:30, Hugh would rush home. He would work on the farm until near dawn the next day, and grab a few winks on the way back to Fort Bragg.

Ever since Hurricane Helene, Hugh and Mable Danford, Travis and Louise Danford, even the boys' mother, Mrs. Jewell Danford, have concentrated on nothing but cutting their debt down to size. Both wives work full-time in town, and Mrs. Danford works when she can.

All of their money except for bare living expense went to paying off their debt. In 1960 the family's gross income from all sources came to \$38,000. Operating costs of the dairy was \$18,000. They put \$15,000 on their debt which left \$5,000. Ten people lived on that \$5,000, Hugh and Mable with their two small children; Travis and Louise

with their two; and the Ephraim Danfords.

Tragedy hit the Danfords again in the fall of 1960 when a fire destroyed the home at the dairy where Hugh's family had been living with his parents. There was only \$5,000 insurance on the house. Hugh bought his parents a \$13,000 home in town. Then he and Mable moved into a trailer on the farm.

Now the Danford are milking 48 cows in a herd of 74. Their herd average is just above 10,000 pounds of milk and about 370 pounds of butterfat. As for the future Hugh and Travis plan to grow "to where everybody can live good." They would like to have 100-200 cows and a new milking system.

The Danford story is one of deep courage, hard work, strong family love and hard-headed concentration on a goal. Through all of their trials they have remained cheerful and full of hope. As Hugh says, "You can push me a long way, but you can't keep me down."

The historical Danford Dairy Farm in Bolivia once operated by the late Travis and Louise Danford now operates as a pesticide-free berry farm and the name has been changed to Lively Grove Farms operated by the family's descendants and offers family-friendly agricultural activities. A true multi-generational family operation rooted in nearly 200 years of combined family heritage.

Sources: *National Weather Service, Tim Armstrong, July 26, 2020.*

Wikipedia, Effects of Hurricane Helene in North Carolina.

Wikipedia, Hurricane Helene (1958).

State Port Pilot Newspaper, Danford

Dairy Project, Tom Wood, June 14,

1961. Submitted by James Green.

liveligrovefarms.com

Personal War Account of Edward Lancaster of Brunswick County

Unlike some other generational families of Brunswick County our Lancaster's did not come to the New World through New England but rather through the Tide Water area of colony Virginia settling in Lawnes Creek Parish, Surry County, Virginia just south of Williamsburg.

There was much upheaval in England in the 1600's and in almost every case the problems

stemmed from politics and from the leaders' intense desire for power. The need for economic opportunities was great. England was running out of forests, which was a natural resource for the production of furniture and glass. The people complained of being so heavily taxed that they could hardly make a living to support their families. England also had enemies abroad, including the Spanish Armada that stained the financial reserves of the treasury.

On top of the economic pressures, The Church of England was in an upheaval of its own. There was a struggle for power over whether or not the Church could force every individual to support the state Church, or whether other denominations and beliefs would be tolerated. Finally this struggle brought about a great persecution against people who were of any other faith than the State approved Church of England.

The time had come for a change. A New World had been discovered and talk about the attempt at establishing a colony in this New World had already begun. As news spread of the opportunity and possibilities, people of great courage and faith began to dream of a place where freedom and economic opportunity might reign. So began a great movement.

People of courage and vision packed up what belongings they could take and boarded tiny ships and traveled 4 to 5 miserable months just to reach this new land of promise. Men, women, boys and girls approached the shores of the new land off the Atlantic and sailed up the Chesapeake Bay, the Potomac River, and the James River into the new land they would call Virginia or Maryland. They could hardly believe the vast, beautiful wilderness they approached.

The Lancaster's were no exception arriving in the earliest years of American colonization. One of the earliest and first proven Lancaster's to come to America was Robert Lancaster of Lawnes Creek Parish in Surry County, Virginia. He was probably a very young man at the time he arrived in Virginia, and it is feasible that his passage costs were paid by another person as was often the custom at that time. The system of paying the cost of transportation from the old country to America was called Headrights. Any man who paid the passage-way for another man, woman or child was allowed 50 acres of unclaimed land per person. This system

accomplished two purposes; it brought in settlers by the hundreds and provided a means of obtaining land in the colonies.

Robert Lancaster, sometimes found as Lancashear, Lanchaster, and Lanquishear was born in England about 1635 was the proven progenitor of our Lancaster family in Brunswick County. It is not known the date of his arrival in Virginia because of few records for this colonial period. Clerks of that era often spelled names as they sounded, therefore the different spellings found in early records. One probable cause of these varied spellings could have been that the surname Lancaster was at one time pronounced LAN' kes ster as it is today in England.

The earliest record which has been located for any Lancaster in the southern Tidewater area of Virginia was that of the proven progenitor of our Lancaster's, Robert Lancaster. This document dated November 7, 1652 is a petition which Robert Lancashear and 70 other men signed, and it is registered in the original court records for Surry County.

Robert, arriving in Virginia before November 1652, married his first wife, whose name remains unknown, abt. 1668 in Surry County, Virginia. They had three children, Robert Jr., Elizabeth, and Samuel. His wife died sometime before 1709, and he then married Sara Lewis Bennett, widow of Richard Bennett, Sr. abt. 1710 or 1711. They had no children.

This Lancaster family remained in the southeastern section of Virginia for over 100 years. Sometime during or following the Revolutionary War some members of the family began migrating into North Carolina then points south and west. Benjamin Lancaster Sr., a great grandson of Robert Sr., can be found in Edgecombe County, North Carolina in 1775 after living in Johnston County, North Carolina. Benjamin was a Patriot of the Revolutionary War furnishing Indian corn to the revolutionary cause.

Benjamin's son, Benjamin Jr., a Patriot serving in the Revolutionary War had migrated to Craven County, North Carolina sometime between 1783 and 1790. He received a land grant in 1791 for 96 acres in Craven County and another land grant in 1798 for 100 acres. He also purchased an additional 300 acres before 1802. His grandson, Jesse Lancaster Jr., born on November 26, 1812 in Craven

County moved even farther south to Brunswick County about 1846.

Jesse Jr. was a short man in comparison with most Lancaster men who were fabled to be big muscular men, most having very dark brown or black hair, with either clear blue or green eyes and highly arched eyebrows. In later years Jesse Jr. was known to wear a long white beard. Jesse first married Celia Nelson of Craven County and had three children by her. She died in 1836 while giving birth to the third child. He married Nancy Causey, also of Craven County on December 9, 1839. Together they had ten children with Edward Roscoe the first born on November 3, 1840 in Craven County.

Jesse and Nancy moved to Brunswick County in 1846 after the turpentine farming started to decline in Craven County. After arriving in Brunswick County he first obtained a land grant for 100 acres and then he subsequently purchased approximately 1600 more acres for his turpentine farm, all in the Varnamtown area. His name appears often in the Brunswick County land records.

His family was considered fairly wealthy by those days' standards, and he built a two-story plantation house for his wife and children. The house eventually burned in the 1930's. Jesse was a very kind and generous man, giving or practically gave land to someone in need. In 1883 he gave land for a new school. The school land committee paid \$2.00, which was thought to be needed for the land transfer to be legal and final.

It is thought that Jesse and Nancy had acquired 13 slaves after moving to Brunswick County. It is said that he was a kind man to work for and was thought highly of by his workers, giving permission for them to marry and produce a family and never allowed them to be separated. After the war he gave each slave family several acres and a house. Several of these families continued to work for him as paid workers.

As in all families the Civil War interrupted their accustomed way of life and brought a hostile reality to them that would change their lives forever. One can only imagine the emotion that Jesse and Nancy must have felt as they watched their oldest son, Edward, march off to war.

After the Civil War broke out, Edward, at the age of 20 entered the confederate army and was eventually stationed on Fort Fisher. He was fortunate enough to live through many confrontations

and through two heavy amphibious attacks before the fort was finally captured at the final battle. He was there in January of 1865.

Fort Fisher had been through several weeks of heavy battles before the final battle lasting three days. Supplies were low, and the soldiers were close to starvation on several occasions. Sickness, including the yellow fever, had threatened over and over. January of 1865 by historical accounts say that the weather was bitterly cold. On the final day of battle the Yankee gunners and foot soldiers broke through the fort parapets, killing everything and everyone in sight. The battle was fierce and raged on for hours.

The following is the story of Edwards' escape as told on June 13, 1995 by his grandson, Jesse Warren Lancaster, Sr. to his daughter-in-law, Brenda McDaniel Lancaster, and confirmed by several older family members.

"After the Yankees broke into the fort and they saw that everyone was being killed, my grandpa and several others escaped by jumping into the Cape Fear and swimming across to the other side. The Yankees saw them get out on the other side of the river and signaled for them to be captured. They hid out in the woods and swamps all along the way, trying to make it back home to Brunswick County. At one point, they came up to a farm house and saw a man working outside. They asked him if he had anything that they could eat, that they were starving to death. They didn't have on any shoes. The man told them to go around to the kitchen and his wife would give them something to eat and some water. They went around and asked the woman, and she told them to come into the kitchen. She gave them some food (chicken or something). Then the man came running to the kitchen door and told them that Yankee soldiers were coming up the road. They ran out the kitchen door and down behind the house and hid in the woods under some honeysuckle. From there they could see and hear the Yankees as they came up to the house and asked the woman if she had seen any rebel soldiers. When she told them "no", they asked who that was that had just ran out the back door. She told them that it must have been her son, because no one else was there. They shoved her aside and said they were going inside to check, and if they found any sign that rebels had been there, they would kill them all. They went inside and checked and came

back outside and left. The whole time my grandpa could see and hear everything that was happening. If they had found them, they would have killed them, and they would have killed that whole family that was helping them. After that he finally walked the whole way, and found his way home."

Brenda Lancaster goes on to say, "I don't know how long it took them to get home, or how long it had taken them to get to the farmer's house. We don't know whether or not he lost his shoes in the river, or if he was already without them, due to short supplies. But one thing we do know. It was the middle of January, and historical accounts reveal that it was a cold winter, so I don't think our imaginations can possibly make it any worse that it was. Imagine, having to leave your friends and comrades either dead or still in battle, swimming the Cape Fear, freezing to death without shoes, scared to death, weak from lack of food and with Yankees chasing you! And it's not a fairy tale-it really happened-to one of your grandfathers."

Doris Thompson, a Lancaster cousin who has also done a lot of research on this family said, "Edwards' commanding officer told them to go, to escape, and that a lot of soldiers had escaped through different routes."

The fort attack was over on January 16, 1865, and Edward worked hard to recuperate from his ordeal. Ten months after his escape on November 18, 1865, he married his first cousin, Emily Lancaster from Craven County.

Edwards' war injuries both physical and emotional caused a lifetime of health problems. He never had the strength that he had previously causing him to lease out his turpentine farm to some of the black families that had previously been slaves on the Lancaster farm. Emily had to attend to all of the heavy farming, and their children started helping at a very young age.

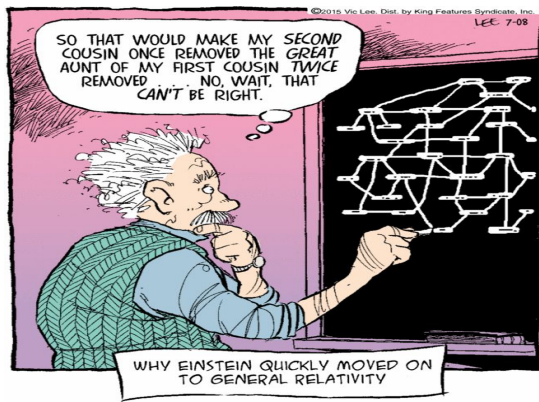
After her death, Edward told his grandson, Hoyd, "I still hate that Emily had to do all the heavy work. I still feel bad about that".

Emily's brother, William, was killed and her father was reported wounded and captured, and another brother, Roscoe, fought during the Civil War. But, Edward and Emily preserved and their struggles continued as they raised four healthy children to adulthood while they lost five children either at birth or in infancy. Both Edward and Emily were born on southern plantations to fairly wealthy

and prominent families, but their world had changed drastically, and their life was no bed of roses.

Editors Note: I would like to thank Bayard Lancaster Teigan, Brenda McDaniel Lancaster, and Doris Lancaster Thompson for shearing their Lancaster research. Mr. Teigan sent me a copy of his book some twenty-five years ago. Mrs. Lancaster gave Gwen Causey a copy of her book and Gwen recently passed it on to me. Doris Lancaster Thompson also shared with me some of her research many years ago. This personal account would not have been possible without their help.

*Sources: The Lancaster's, 300 Years in America, by Bayard Lancaster Teigan.
The Family Heritage of Jesse Warren Lancaster Sr., by Brenda Lancaster
Personal Family Knowledge, Dave Lewis*



Local Events

August 8, 2026: Join Ranger Jason Howell for a guided tour of the **Moore's Creek National Battlefield**. The tour meets outside the visitor center and lasts approximately 90 minutes. This event is free to the public.

August 14-21, 2026: American Revolution Experience sponsored by The American Battlefield Trust and the DAR present an exhibit with custom illustrations by South Carolina based artist Dale Watson covering experiences of ordinary people during the American Revolution from 1758-1826. Southwest Brunswick Branch Library, 9400 Ocean Highway West, Carolina Shores, NC. Free and open to the public.

August 15, 2026: Why are North Carolinians known as Tar Heels. Moore's Creek National Battlefield Ranger Adam Credle will host a special program on tar, pitch, and turpentine and its role in developing the North Carolina economy. Meet in the amphitheater and is free to the public.

October 17, 2026: Port Brunswick Day. The annual return of Port Brunswick Day will be held at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson. Living historians will be interpreting various colonial trades and aspects of colonial life. All ages are welcome, plus kids will have an opportunity to experience colonial toys and games. Saturday, October 17, 10:00am to 4:00pm. This event 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: ☒ ☐ **Note: Please include a \$10.00 fee for printing and USPS mailing**

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 9, 2026
May 11, 2026
August 10, 2026
November 09, 2026



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