

NEWSLETTER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
731 Hickman Rd. NW Calabash, NC 28467
brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org

VOLUME LXV NOVEMBER 09, 2026 NUMBER 4

Organized June 21, 1956

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 2027 - 2029 Term

President: Jennifer Kye Gates
Vice-President: Nicole Sullivan
Secretary/Treasurer: David Bennett
Directors: Dave Lewis

Newsletter Editor: Dave Lewis
Webmaster: Charles Clemmons
brunswickcountyhistoricalsociety.org
Program Committee: Tammy Cully, Kimberly Carte, Brandon Moldvan and Hulaine Holden

FOLLOW US ON:

NOVEMBER MEETING TO BE HELD AT BEMC IN SUPPLY, NC NOVEMBER 09, 2026 at 7:30 P.M.

The next meeting of the ***Brunswick County Historical Society*** will be held on Monday, November 9th, 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 for the year 2027 will be payable on January 1, 2026 unless you are a Life Member. The annual dues are $15.00 for an active member or $150.00 to become a Life Member. ***There is an additional $10.00 fee for a printed and mailed Newsletter, emails are free with paid dues.*** Checks may be mailed to the ***BCHS*** in care of David Bennett 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.

Program

This meeting's program will be a business meeting only with presenters starting in February.

There will be many items on the agenda, including; Non-Profit Status, Bi-Laws Review, Meeting Schedule, Directors Positions, Committees Stated in the Bi-Laws, Website, Membership Recruitment, and Online Payment Options.

With this many items to discuss the BCHS needs input from the membership. Please plan to attend if possible and help the BCHS to grow.

Meet Your New Officers

A very productive August meeting of the BCHS has resulted in a new slate of officers to lead us into the future. Jennifer Kye Gates was elected as President and Nicole Sullivan as Vice President. David Bennett has agreed to be our new Secretary/ Treasurer. All have come from generational Brunswick County families with their roots running deep within the county.

The BCHS wishes to thank our outgoing officers James Green, Gwen Causey and Bob Armour for their fateful service over the last seven years by leading us through the COVID pandemic and continuing to grow the Society and preserving local history.

Also created at the August meeting was a Program Committee of four members to assist the Vice President in finding presenters for our quarterly meetings. Elected to this committee were Tammy Cully, Kimberly Carte, Brandon Moldovan, and Hulaine Holden. The Board of Directors vacancies will be addressed at the November meeting.

Let's all welcome our new officers as they usher in a new chapter for the BCHS. Since August 1954 we have been dedicated to preserving and studying the history and genealogy of Brunswick County.

From the President: Honoring Our Past, Shaping Our Future

Dear Members,

As we leave behind the long, hot, and exceptionally dry days of summer 2026 and welcome the promise of a new season, the Brunswick County Historical Society is also beginning a new chapter.

It is a tremendous honor to serve as your incoming president. Since its organization in 1954, the Society has worked to collect, preserve, study, and share the history of Brunswick County. We are blessed with many dedicated and knowledgeable members who can help recount that history and deepen our understanding of the people, places, traditions, and events that make our county so truly special.

Historian David McCullough once said, "History is who we are and why we are the way we are." Those words beautifully express why the work of this Society matters. History is not simply a record of what happened long ago. It lives in our families, communities, photographs, documents, historic buildings, cemeteries, traditions, and personal stories. When those stories are shared and preserved, they become a lasting gift to future generations.

This responsibility is especially important as Brunswick County continues to experience tremendous growth and change. As the landscape around us changes, so does the urgency of identifying, documenting, conserving, and protecting the historic places and stories that connect us to our past. Progress and preservation do not have to stand in opposition to one another, but preserving our history requires awareness, commitment, and a willingness to act before something meaningful is lost.

Serving as president is also personally meaningful to me because my family has been part of this organization for decades. My father, Glenn Eugene Kye, is a lifetime member, and his dedication to preserving local history, particularly the cemeteries and final resting places of Brunswick County families and veterans helped shape my own appreciation for this work. I am proud to continue that family tradition of service while helping the Society prepare for its future.

Speaking of the stories and connections passed down through generations, I recently experienced a wonderful reminder of what can be discovered when historical records are preserved. While reading through the Society's past meeting minutes and newsletters, I learned that members of my husband's family had also served this organization. Neither of us knew about that part of his family's history, and it was a pleasant surprise to discover yet another connection we share as two people whose families have deep roots in Brunswick County.

That discovery was more than an interesting piece of family history. It reminded me that our very own archives hold stories still waiting to be rediscovered. A name recorded in old minutes, a photograph tucked inside a family album, or a memory shared by one of our members may help someone understand a part of their own history they never knew. This is why preserving and sharing these records is so important: They connect generations and remind us that Brunswick County's history is made up of the lives and contri-

butions of its people.

As we move forward, I hope we will build upon the strong foundation established by those who came before us. I am grateful for their leadership, service, and commitment to keeping Brunswick County's history alive. I look forward to working with each of you as we welcome new members, encourage greater participation, expand our programs, and find meaningful ways to share our county's rich and varied history.

Every member has something valuable to contribute. Whether you have lived here all your life or have more recently made Brunswick County your home, your memories, research, photographs, family histories, experiences, and ideas can help strengthen our Society.

Thank you for your continued membership and support. I am excited about what we can accomplish together as we honor our past, preserve what remains, and carry the stories of Brunswick County confidently into the future.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Kye-Gates
President
Brunswick County Historical Society

Captain Sam Potts

Source: "Kin'Lin' Book 1980-81, Vol. II, Number 5, Hillsboro High School. Submitted by James Green. Author Unknown. As Written.

Immediately after the Civil War, a man named Samuel Potts arrived at Lake Waccamaw. He was a brilliant young man from Southport who had joined the Confederate Army and was soon recognized for his brilliance. He became General Lee's telegrapher. He always accompanied Lee and became a great friend of Jefferson Davis. He sent all the messages that Lee ever sent. Potts kept a copy of all these messages. To the distress of historians, it is said that he took all these dispatches which he kept in a trunk and buried them for safekeeping. Later on, he became worried that someone might find them and use them as evidence to incriminate some friends in the Confederacy. Consequently, he dug up the trunk and destroyed them. Also some historians think that he might well have saved part of the material or even hidden it in an attic somewhere. Many have often speculated about these papers.

Captain Potts stopped at the lake on his way home from the Civil War. Jefferson Davis bought him a horse in Concord, and he rode as far as Lake Waccamaw. He liked it here and did not return to Southport. Since he was a telegrapher, he applied for a position as station agent. He was given the job and spent most of the rest of his life there. He ran a telegraphy school and always had six or seven young men living in his home and never charged them anything.

He built a steamboat called the Bohemian Girl. This was a forty-foot open boat with a top on it. It had a big steam engine in it. He had a little pier near where the Boys Home pier is today. On Sunday afternoons, he would take people to ride around the lake. He had room for about fifty people and had no trouble filling it on Sundays. He would cruise around the lake. As a joke, he would sometimes take mismatched couples and leave them stranded together on a log or a stump out in the water. Once he left my mother and Martin Schulken (the father of the owner of Whiteville Florist) on a stump all afternoon.

Now he was a profane man and used rather strong language. Once he had a Sunday School class on board when the boat hit a log and sprang a leak. It began to sink. Some of the people got rather emotional and began to pray. The rest of the passengers began to bail the water out. Potts was trying to get the boat to shore. It is reported that he said, using very foul language, "If you – people will do less praying and more bailing, we might save this boat." He did manage to get it to shore.

Eventually, the Bohemian Girl burned.

Mr. Potts loved photography. I have accumulated quite a few of his pictures, which actually provide much information on life the way it was in this locality during the last part of the nineteenth century. He made pictures of people riding to the lake in a buggy. He made pictures of people there for a Sunday afternoon outing. He made pictures of the Bohemian Girl and the scenery around the lake. Some pictures he made of himself. We think he must have invented the time-released shutter and probably other parts for a camera. We have heard of other things he invented. He must have been a very creative person.

One day he invited Charles Westinghouse to come to Lake Waccamaw on a hunting and fishing trip. While he was there watching the mechanism of the train, Mr. Potts explained to Mr. Westinghouse about how to make a new brake that worked on an air principle. The following year, Mr. Westinghouse patented the Westinghouse airbrake and built the factory that made him a multi-multi-millionaire. Mr. Potts never received and recognition for this.

Captain Potts also improved the telegraph. One might say that he "married" sound to the Morse code. At that time they used the dot-dash printed on the tape. He invented the sound for the dot-dash system. Three different people claim to have made this improvement, but on his tombstone is carved a telegraphic key.

Potts is buried in the Whiteville Memorial Cemetery, on the north side. During the last three years of his life he was very ill. It is though that he had tuberculosis. He moved to Whiteville and is buried there.



Bohemian Girl
"The History of Lake Waccamaw" by Bobby Powell and Susann Prescott Little

Editors Note: Captain Samuel Chatham Potts was born October 11, 1847. It is unknown whether he was born in Wilmington or Southport. Reported to be the son of Robert James Potts and Sarah Jane Dunbibben. He died on June 1, 1910 and is buried in Whiteville Memorial Cemetery. He married Louisa Smith on July 3, 1868 in New Hanover County, NC. They had three children, Eliza Dunbibben Potts, Samuel Chatham Potts, Jr. and Junius Smith Potts.

A monument to Sam Potts reads:

Captain Sam C. Potts
Confederate Telegrapher for General Robert E. Lee
Friend of Jefferson Davis
Railroad Telegraph Operator at Lake Waccamaw
Builder and Operator of Steamboat "Bohemian Girl"
Southern Hero, Inventor, Builder, Photographer, Teacher, A Friend to All.

Daws Creek Academy

Source: State Port Standard, March 8, 1900. Transcribed as written.

That community on Town Creek near Lebanon Baptist Church has already shown an encouraging awakening in educational work that is in a measure a recompense for the noble efforts of certain promoters in endeavoring to open a permanent school in that neighborhood.

That section of the county cannot boast of wealth, but by united effort the people have come together with their own means and by soliciting some outside aid, have erected a suitable school building in which they propose maintaining a school for eight months of the year.

The school will be controlled by a board of trustees, composed of young men, of the community who have the assistance of other more experienced; and it is proposed to build up a substantial common school, which will be the most potent factor in advancing that or any other similar section. The school will show what united people may accomplish.

On Saturday last Mr. W. W. Bryan, of Mars Hill, Madison County, arrived to open the school, which will have a short session this Spring. Mr. Bryan is of Wake Forests College, which fact commends him to this work in that community, in which we predict for him a successful school.

More on Daws Creek Academy.

There is not much information available on Daws Creek Academy and often listed as Daw's Creek School. This was an early 20th-cemtury educational institution located in the Funston community of Brunswick County.

Historical records from around 1900-1905 document that the school was operated with B. G. Early serving as its first principal.

The school was located near Daw's Creek on land that is in the Funston area, situated between modern-day Leland and Southport/Boiling Spring Lakes near what is now Daws Creek Road.

Local historical surveys note that the school sat on a farm later owned by Wilbur and Mary Earp. The surrounding community adopted the name "Funston" when a local post office was established there, named after U.S. Army General Frederick N. Funston.

B. G. Early was a prominent Baptist minister and educator serving various communities in Eastern North Carolina. He served as principal of Daws Creek Academy between 1902-1905.

The North Carolina Yearbook 1906, published by the Raleigh "News and Observer" shows Dr. Brown as principal of Daws Creek and the 1907 edition list Rev. Mizzel (Rev. J. C. Mizell) as the principal.

Also from the State Port Standard, March 8, 1900. As written.

Excelsior Items

It becomes our duty to announce the death of Miss Amelia Williamson, a lady of 60 years, which occurred on the 28th February. She had for sometime past been a great sufferer from internal tumor which terminated fatally on the date.

Preparation for planting is beginning to engage the minds of farmers here and will be pushed with vigor.

The logging enterprise is being pushed with unabated energy, in spite of bad weather, bad roads, etc.

There is considerable freshet in the Waccamaw, while it has not at any time reached highwater mark, it has been the most continuous for several years. The swamps and low lands being overflowed most of the time for the past two months.

From the Editor: Has anyone ever heard the Jimmy Buffett song "Everyone has a Cousin in Miami?" Maybe it should have been written for Brunswick County and titled "Everyone has a Cousin in Brunswick County."

Veterans Day

Veterans Day is a holiday dedicated to American veterans of all wars, and Veterans Day 2026 occurs on Wednesday, November 11.



In November 1918 during World War I - at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of that year - an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, was declared between the Allied nations and Germany.

Commemorated the following year as Armistice Day in many countries, November 11th became a federal holiday in the United States in 1938. In the aftermath of World War II and the Korean War, Armistice Day became known as Veterans Day.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, marking the official end of World War I. Nonetheless, the armistice date of November 11, 1918, remained in the public imagination as the date that marked the end of the conflict.

One year later, in November 1919, US President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11, as the first commemoration of Armistice Day. The day's

observation included parades and public gatherings, as well as a brief pause in business and school activities at 11:00am.

On November 11, 1921, an unidentified American soldier killed in the war was buried at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. On the same day the previous year, unidentified soldiers were laid to rest at Westminster Abbey in London and at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

On June 4, 1926, Congress passed a resolution that the "recurring anniversary of November 11, 1918, should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations," and that the president should issue an annual proclamation calling for the observance of Armistice Day.

In 1954, after lobbying efforts by veterans' service organizations, the 83rd U.S. Congress amended the 1938 act that had made Armistice Day a holiday, striking the word "Armistice" in favor of "Veterans." President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the legislation on June 1, 1954. From then on, November 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

To our men and women, in uniform, past, present and future, God Bless You and Thank You.

Minutes

Brunswick County Historical Society
August 10, 2026

The Brunswick County Historical Society meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by the President, James Green. There were 21 members and 4 via Zoom 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 February, 2026 minutes were reviewed by the Secretary. (There was no meeting in May, 2026.)

The Treasurer reported a bank balance of $8960.50. It was suggested by Gwen Causey that we make a donation to one of the historical-related non-profits in Brunswick County, NC. The new Officers will look into this suggestion. We added 2 new members: Elisa Wilson and Brandon Moldovan.

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. David Holden explained the duties of each Officer.

An extensive and lively discussion followed with several members offering their opinions and suggestions. The presence of so many members was indicative that there is a need for the Society to continue holding meetings. The idea of using Zoom (or live streaming) will be explored by the new Officers.

A motion to continue with the Society meeting 4 times a year was made by David Bennett and seconded by David Holden. A unanimous vote followed.

Jennifer Kye Gates volunteered to assume the position of President with the capable assistance of her father, Glenn Kye. Nicole Sullivan volunteered to assume the position of Vice President. David Bennett has volunteered to assume the position of Secretary/Treasurer. These were elected to serve as the officers of the Society

A motion to create a Program Committee of 4 members to help get speakers was made by Glenn Kye and seconded by Tammy Cully. A unanimous vote followed. The committee members will report to the Vice President who will introduce the speaker at the meetings. The 4 volunteers are Tammy Cully, Kimberly Carte, Brandon Moldovan and Hulaine Holden.

The President announced the following event at Brunswicktown State Historic Site: Port Brunswick Day on October 17, 2026. Also announced:

"American Revolution Experience", August 15-21, 2026 at the Southwest Brunswick Branch Library and "Why are North Carolinians known as Tar Heels" at Moores Creek National Battlefield on August 15, 2026.

The next meeting will be November 9, 2026.

Motion to adjourn.

Members present: James Green, Nicole Sullivan, Gwen Causey, Richard Hollenbeck, David Bennett, Dave Lewis, David Holden, Judy Holden, Kimberly Carte, Yvonne Brown, Glenn Kye, Jennifer Gates, Brian Clemmons, Arty Phelps, Peggy Wilson, Harvard Holden, Hulaine Holden.
Via Zoom: Carol Jutte, Tammy Cully, Katherine Moore, Frances Ward.

Visitors present: Cheryl Luke, Brandon Moldovan, Elisa Wilson, Sherry Inman.
Gwen Causey, Acting Secretary

As the "Newsletter" editor, I wish to thank Brandon Moldovan for his assistance in enhancing the BCHS logo and minor changes to the front page.

Area Events

November 07, 2026; ***The Great Pumpkin Blowout***, Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson. Dispose of your pumpkin in an unique and rather explosive way. BYOP (bring your own pumpkin). A $10.00 fee per pumpkin. Free to watch. Tickets can be purchased at on the day of the event. 11:00am to 4:00pm.

November 21, 2026: ***Candlelight Tour***, Moores Creek National Battlefield. Family friendly program will travel along the candlelit trail with stories of the early days of the American Revolution and the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge. Tours last approximately 45 minutes and will depart from Patriot's Hall every 15 minutes. First tour begins at 5:30 and last tour departs at 8:30. Tours are free, but you must make a reservation for a slot. Contact the park at 910-283-5591.

December 12, 2026: ***Southport Holiday Home Tour***, Southport Historical Society. Part of the annual Southport's Winterfest Festival, the Holiday Home Tour has been sponsored by the Southport Historical Society since 2000. Saturday times will be 11:00am to 5:00pm and a smaller guided tour will also be offered Friday, December 11, from 1:00pm to 5:30pm. Tickets are $35 per person for Saturday and $75 for Friday.

December 13, 2026: ***An 18th Century Christmas***, Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson. Explore how the American colonists celebrated Christmas. Participate in traditional games and crafts. Refreshments will be in the Visitor Center and candlelit service in the ruins of St. Philip's Anglican Church. Fee, $5:00 per person. 1:00pm to 5:30pm. Candlelit service will began at 5:00pm.

Membership Application … Invite a Friend to Join Brunswick County Historical Society

Name(s):_____

Address:_____

Telephone:_____ E-Mail_____

New:_____ Renewal:____ Gift:_____ Amount Enclosed:

Receive ***Newsletter*** by email: Y N ***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: BCHS, 731 Hickman Rd. NW, Calabash, NC 28467

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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