

The Curse of Bath



Reverend George Whitefield delivers the "Curse of Bath."

Article by Mary Gray and Beth Martin

Drawings by Mary Gray

Located on a spit of land bounded on three sides by water, the old village of Bath is perhaps the town in eastern North Carolina richest in legend, folklore, and history. An earlier story in *Life on the Pamlico* (summer, 1982) dealt with probably the most famous of the stories associated with Bath: "The Devil's Hoofprints." Other stories concern the notorious adventures of Blackbeard, the pirate, who used Bath as a hideaway. An outdoor drama, given during the summer at Bath, celebrates the adventures of the pirate.

This article deals with yet another story of Bath, the so-called "Curse of Bath." Mrs. Betty Hughes, long time resident of Bath and lead instructor of English here at the college, is perhaps as knowledgeable as anyone about the old stories surrounding Bath. So we talked to her about the "Curse of Bath."

Mrs. Hughes told us that a famous minister of colonial times, George Whitefield (pronounced Whit, not Whitt), supposedly became angered at the town and cursed it. Among other things, Whitefield stated that the town would neither prosper nor grow. Today, many people in Bath believe that Whitefield's curse is true because--at least on the surface--these two aspects of his curse have proven accurate. At any rate, this is just one aspect of the story, which Mrs. Hughes discussed with us.

Who was George Whitefield and how did the situation build up? Just what happened?

George Whitefield was a colonial preacher, who followed the Wesleys in the early days of his ministry. He came to America in 1738; he came into Savannah, Georgia. Before he

ever got off the boat, he preached a mighty sermon that inspired the sailors that were on the ship to turn from their ways. He generally



Whitefield preached a mighty sermon that inspired the sailors to turn from their sinful ways.

had that kind of effect on people all up and down the east coast. And that's where he did most of his ministry. He traveled; he made four trips that have been documented through the town of Bath.

And back in those days, in colonial times, Bath was a pretty important place. It had a population of about 250, maybe 300 people at the most, but it was a river port [to which] ships would come in from England loaded down with rocks, ballast rocks, which you can still find in Bath Creek. And they would throw those rocks overboard and then load the ships back up with tar, turpentine and timber and sail back to England. And sometimes as many as 30 or 40 of these ships would come into Bath during the year. And this was the kind of Bath that Whitefield knew.

In town there was a church, the St. Thomas Church, which is still there and which is still used. There were some hotels, a few stores, the various things that would be available in a colonial town, and houses in the town and houses surrounding the town.

He first traveled to Bath in 1739, so he began his travels rather soon after he came to America in 1738. It is documented that he was through Bath in 1747 and 1748; in fact, some people believe he spent the winter [of 1748] in Bath. And he made it his headquarters in the colonies for--how did he call it?--"preaching the gospel in the un-gospelized wilds." And his journals show that whenever he was approaching Bath, he had come in from Edenton. And he had taken, I think it must have been, Bell's Ferry as well as I can find out, across the Albemarle Sound and had come on down the Post Road, or

the Colonial Road, that existed from North Wilkin, Edenton, right on through Wilmington and on down into Savannah.

So in this time that he was through Bath, he wrote about hearing the wolves howling in the woods, [Bath] being such a desolate and lonely place. But whenever he got to Bath, he wrote about how cordial the people were to him and what comfortable homes some of the people had.

But when he got into town, he would send to the resident minister and ask him if he could address the congregation. And he was nearly always given permission to do that. Through the winter of 1747-48, from the best records that we could find, he stayed in Bath. He wrote some letters from [Bath] and apparently preached a great many sermons. So he really had a good warm feeling for the town. He came back through Bath again in 1764 and again in 1765. But apparently he never came again after that. On one of these trips, folks--well, folklore--have it that he placed a curse on the town. Now there's a woman at Brevard who says, without any doubt at all, that he did it in 1764.

What does she base her statement on?

She doesn't say. She just says it with a great deal of authority. But I've looked at his journals and I've looked at existing contemporary records of each of these journals, and I can't find any indication that he ever cursed any place. But it's just told by so many different people that he did it, and it's told several different ways.

Let's just say for the sake of argument that he did and look at the terms of his curse.

Edmund Harding, who was sort of a good-will ambassador of Bath, said that the curse went something like this: "May you never prosper; may you never grow." Well, a lot of people think that that is actually what Whitefield said because the population of Bath in colonial times was about 250, and the population of Bath in the town limits right now is not much more than that. If you were to go--I don't know if I should say this or not--but if you were to take a census, a door-to-door census of Main Street in Bath, you would find widow, widow, widow, widow, which doesn't say anything about the growth potential of the community.

And about the business of never prospering. As we said, the town was really important. It was the home of governors, judges, and congressmen and just occupied a big place in colonial life. But the ships began not to come to Bath anymore; they were beginning to go to ports that were easier to get to or to ports where they had better access to other forms of transportation. The county seat, I understand, at one time was at Bath; then it moved out to Washington, a colonial capital or the residence of the governor. Anyway, Bath is not the capital of North Carolina either. Yet it played a very important role, and it was sort of a hub of activities in colonial times.

It is that way even now because there are no major roads that go through Bath. Two-sixty-four, the major artery to the coast, goes through Belhaven, not through Bath. In other words, you have to know the way to go in order to get there.

According to the story, why did he deliver the curse specifically?

The best that I can figure out is that on one of these occasions when he came to Bath, he was all fired up to preach. (He was a very fiery preacher and a very great orator.) But the people in the community apparently had finished their harvest, and they wanted to have the harvest festival. I guess an extension of this type of festival would be the county fair. They wanted to have their harvest festival, and he wanted to conduct a revival. Well, they were interested, I guess, in the more civic function than they were of the church function.

And Whitefield felt that the people of Bath were a Godless people because they didn't want to hear the gospel preached. Actually the story goes two ways. One of them says that he left there; it doesn't say if he crossed the creek or crossed the river or whether he just went out of town. This story is the one about him leaving in a wagon, and another story is that he left in a carriage.

One story is that he took off his shoes and dusted the dust of the town from his shoes as he quoted from the scriptures. One of the scriptures is Matthew 10: 14-20. The same reference is in Mark. I don't know the scripture reference there, but it's approximately the same wording about withdrawing one's blessings from a household. Jesus was talking to His apostles and disciples, and He said that if you go into a house and the people receive you well, give them your blessing and stay with them for as long as you need to perform your ministry; but if they don't receive you well, don't stay in the house and as you leave, withdraw your blessings. So Whitefield just dramatized this apparently if he did it at all. He dusted the dust of the town off his



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shoes. Well, one version of this story says that he had a slave and that he told his slave to take his shoes and dust the dust off. I haven't found any evidence to support the theory that he had a slave though he may have. It was very common. Certainly, he probably had a servant with him because he was a man of means.

Weren't you telling me also about his great skill as an orator?

He was a friend of Benjamin Franklin. This [story] is in Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography. He was listening to Whitefield when he was addressing a large crowd on Market Street in Philadelphia. Franklin names the steps of the building that Whitefield was standing on. I've never been to Philadelphia, so I don't have any notion where he is talking about. At any rate, Whitefield was addressing the crowd. Franklin began to back up by city block by city block; and having a scientific mind as he did, he began to calculate how many people could stand in a city block and how many city blocks he had backed up. So, finally, he came to a point down near the river, where a cart rattled by and he could no longer hear Whitefield's voice. So he counted up the number of blocks and the number of people that could occupy those blocks. And he theorized that Whitefield's voice could easily be heard by 20,000 people. You know that's a mob!

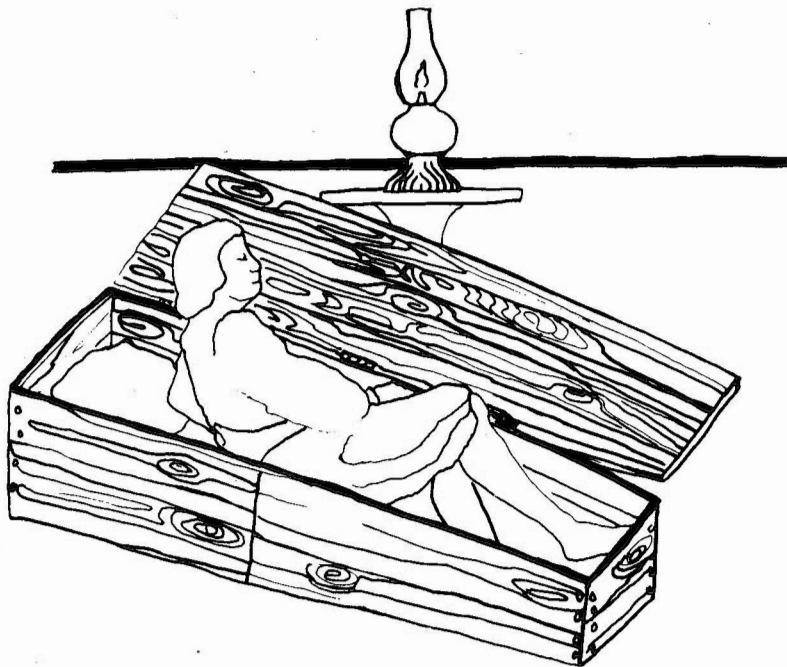
Yes!

Then, somewhere else I read that Whitefield was speaking in Connecticut, and that for miles around people knew he would be speaking there. And on the day that he was supposed to speak in the open fields, the dust rising from the road from all the carts, carriages, wagons,

and people walking made a massive black cloud.

One of the funny things about Whitefield that has been, I guess, confirmed to me two or three different times, perhaps even more than that, is that he had a kind of pessimistic nature or a practicality about him that wasn't pessimistic at all. He also had asthma many, many times. He was left at death's door with asthma, so he carried his coffin around everywhere he went.

He carried his coffin!



According to stories, Whitefield carried his own coffin with him and slept in it!

Carried his coffin with him. One account says he strapped it to the top of his carriage, and another account says he rode around in a wagon and had it loaded in the back of the wagon. A lady from Brevard tells a famous story, which, I assume, would have happened back in Savannah, which he [Whitefield] called home. Mr. Whitefield was at home, and somebody came to call on him. He had been on the road and had been in the habit of sleeping in his coffin because the accommodations in some of these rural inns were not so good. At any rate, this individual was invited into the hall, or whatever they had, and asked to speak to Mr. Whitefield. The servant apparently went to the door, and Mr. Whitefield rose up in the coffin and said, "Yes!" and frightened the individual somewhat. I've heard this story many times.

You've lived in Bath for how long?

I've lived in Bath since 1964.

Does this story about the curse still have an impact on the Bath people?

People still mention it, yes they do. In fact, it's one of the first things I heard when I went to Bath. I don't imagine I lived in Bath for more than a month or two when somebody said, "Do you know there's a curse on Bath?" I asked them about it. They said, "Yes, a colonial minister put a curse on Bath." They said sometime the water won't even flow through here. Well, I never found any confirmation on that.

I have a theory about it. Sometimes when the wind is out of the west, it pushes all the water out, and sometimes you can walk

as far as half a mile out into the river on dry ground. The wind just about takes all the water out. Bath touches two creeks, Bath Creek and Back Creek, or Adams Creek as it is sometimes referred to on old maps. But I've never really seen anything in writing about there being a curse at all on any particular body of water.

There's not any written confirmation that I have been able to find about the curse. It seems to be an old folklore tradition of the English, sort of like the life that Blackbeard lived. He [supposedly] married a girl whose name was Ormond. There's no proof that her name was Ormond. It is generally believed that Blackbeard did marry someone from Bath and that he did live there for a while. Historical records show that he was in and out of there.

I've heard the same folklore about Bath, that is, the curse. Personally, I wonder if it's because of the curse or purely unrelated reasons why Bath didn't grow. Maybe somewhere along the line somebody remembered or it all could have happened because of the power of suggestion. Who's to say?

Who's to say who is right? I'm still looking. Everytime I have a little bit of extra time and can lay hands on some books by Whitefield or about Whitefield, then I look at them. There's a book called The Prince of Orators that I have just combed with a fine-tooth comb. It's just a fascinating book! It is an early biography, early 19th century, I think. It gives a lot of detail about where Whitefield went and who he had contact with. There's a man up at Duke [University] who did a good biography of Whitefield. It's called Wayfaring Witness. I

think the journals are most fascinating because Whitefield is not modest at all. He always talks about how many he preached to. He must have stood and counted heads each time he preached because he'll tell how many souls he witnessed to or preached to, and then he'll tell how many of them were saved and how many of them came forward. Inevitably he'd talk about how elegantly he preached.

In other words, he does sound like the sort of person who would deliver a curse if he was offended.

I had another theory that I have since dismissed. I thought, well, he did it. He cursed the people everywhere that he went. So it wasn't such a consequential thing for him to mention it in his journals or in his diaries. I feel, however, that the answer may lie in the fact that it was a dark period in Whitefield's life. I cannot remember the years just right off hand in which he did not, apparently, write any letters and did not make any journal entries. He was just in sort of an eclipse that could suggest depression or illness. And certainly when one is depressed or when one is ill, he would be more inclined to be impatient. You see, he grew despondent when he learned that the people weren't interested in what he spent his entire life doing.

Another funny thing about Whitefield that I found from reading is that a lot of local [Bath] people want to claim kin to him. I don't really understand how they are doing it because the best records that I can find say that Whitefield was married to an English woman who was his senior. They had one son whose name was John, and John died before he was a year old. There isn't any indication in

any other biography that I have seen that Whitefield ever had another child. Still we have great-great-granddaughters and great-great-grandsons; you know, the woods are full of them. I guess I've got a theory about that too. He established an orphanage in Savannah called the Bethesda Childrens' Home, and it still exists. He perhaps adopted some children from the orphanage, or they took his name in some way or another. So the descendants must come in from that direction because I can't think of anybody as pious as Mr. Whitefield who would behave anyway other than a proper way about his marriage.

Do you have anything else you could add about him?

This was back at Christmas one time; it just happened that way. He writes about staying at the inn and speaking to the people at the church the next day and how starved they seemed to be for a preacher to minister to them. One thing a lot of people just assumed about Mr. Whitefield is that he was a member of the Church of England. But he's not. As I said early on, he was a follower of the Wesleys, but he broke with them and sort of went his own way.

He was a Methodist?

Yes.

And then broke away?

Broke away from the Wesleys. I don't remember the theological point of the breaking. But he sort of established his own way of preaching the gospel.

He got in trouble in England. Seems like

he got in trouble, if this Bath story is so, everywhere he ever preached because he was just rigid in his concept of what individuals ought to do. It was either his way and anything else was outright sin.

He got mixed up on the date he was supposed to preach in Bath, England. And he showed up on the wrong date and proceeded to preach anyway. The person that was supposed to preach showed up too. It was just a mess. He got all excited, and the other person got all excited. And public apologies had to be made. Pretty soon we find out that Whitefield is coming to America and not too much is said about all of that. But apparently the heads of the church didn't think too strongly about his continuing there. They were glad enough to let him come to America. But he went back to England several times after he made that first trip in 1738.

I often wondered what it must have been like when he came over here. He described his traveling. Sometimes he'd take a ship out of the northern ports through to Savannah and bypassed Bath, Charleston, and all the other places in between.

But he mentions Bath in every account that I have ever seen as a comfortable place to stay and mentions having the people literally eat his words. So I find myself more and more doubting that it is a fact that he placed a curse on Bath.

True or untrue? Each of us will have to make up his or her mind concerning George Whitefield's "Curse of Bath." But one thing is certain: the "Curse of Bath" is another piece in the mosaic that is the heritage of this old and fascinating little town, with its picture-postcard old homes and churches.

Kirby Avery

Skins an Otter

Article by Terry Swanner

How many fur coats have you seen in your lifetime? The answer to that question is probably a few here and there. The first thing you may have noticed was how smooth and luxurious the fur was and how the light seemed to dance and glimmer on the thick richness of it. While you admire the beauty of the fur, have you ever given a thought to how such a coat came to be? Probably not, but it is a most interesting subject.

Fur coats, whether they be of fox, mink, or raccoon, just do not suddenly appear by themselves on racks of expensive clothing stores. They arrive there from the factories after a delicate process, the first step of which is skinning and curing.

Mr. Kirby Avery understands the process of skinning and curing a skin, the technique and precision needed to do the job correctly. Mr. Avery is a part time farmer and full time fireman for the Washington, N. C., Fire Department.

Mr. Avery lives in a small rural community

in the Bath township, and it is here in his workshop that Mr. Avery expertly demonstrated the craft of skinning. Mr. Avery traps and skins animals mostly as a sideline job and as a hobby. He sets out his own traps and checks them periodically for a catch. It was on one such trip that he discovered an otter in one of his traps.

An otter in his winter coat is a fine catch as it is the winter coat that is the most desirable of all fur bearing animals for trapping. (This winter coat is called "prime" by trappers. See Claudie Taylor article in December '81 Life on the Pamlico.) An otter can weigh in at anywhere from 18 to 22 pounds and is all muscle, teeth, and claws, a very powerful animal, indeed.

By the time we had arrived at Mr. Avery's home, he had the animal ready to work on. The animal had been washed to remove any dirt from the fur. It was then brushed with a wire brush to remove any burrs that may have been in the fur and was now hanging upside down from a rafter, suspended by a cord tied around a hind leg.

Using a very sharp pocket knife, Mr. Avery made an incision in the underside of the tail all the way to the rump; the cut was continued along the underside of both hind legs and around the rear paws at the ankles.

When the incisions were completed, Mr. Avery then proceeded to peel the hide from the tip of the tail all the way down to the head. He then repeated the process of cutting the hide along the wrists of the front paws and around the head, being very careful not to puncture any major blood vessels as blood-

stains would ruin a good hide. After these final incisions were made, the hide was pulled over the head and off.

The removal of the hide is the most laborious part of the job because of the many ligaments connecting the hide to the body. Once the hide was removed, it was turned inside out so that the skin side of the hide was now showing. Then it was stretched over a fleshing beam.

A fleshing beam, which looks very much like an ironing board, is used in conjunction with what is called a fleshing knife. This knife is a bowed blade with wooden handles on both ends. The knife is drawn over the skin to remove any excess fat and grease; it is important to try to get all the fat and grease off of the hide as these will ruin the curing of the hide.

While Mr. Avery was fleshing the hide, he told us a few facts about the value of various furs and animals. The money is in raccoon fur, which often sells for as much as \$20.00 to \$25.00 for a good quality hide. A good hide will have a white flesh color, rather than a grayish blue color of a poorer quality hide. The colors change with the seasons, with the poorer quality found in November and the better quality found in the colder months. He also said otter fur will sell for pretty much the same price as the raccoon, but no furs will bring good money if they aren't prepared properly.

When Mr. Avery finished fleshing the hide, he removed it from the fleshing board and placed the hide in a bucket of corn meal. The corn meal will soak up any excess grease and fat left over from the fleshing process. The hide was

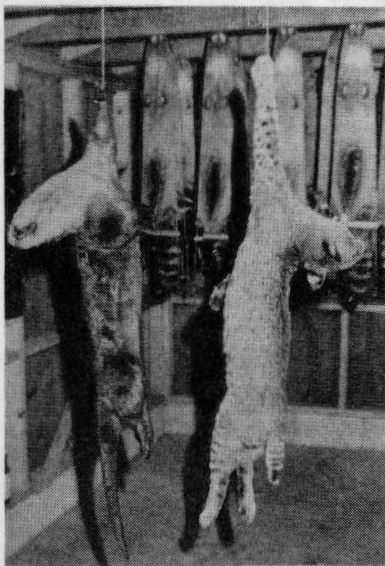
rolled around in the corn meal for a few minutes and was then popped several times in the air to remove the corn meal. The hide was combed to remove any snarls in the fur and then made ready for the final process of being stretched over a stretching board.

A stretching board is a tapered plank that again resembles a small ironing board. The hide was tacked on the board with aluminum alloy tacks; these are used to prevent rust from spoiling the fur. The hide was then placed in a cool area out of the sun, to avoid tainting the fur, to dry and cure.

Mr. Avery told us that great care must be taken in all areas of the process so as not to cut or tear holes in the hide as this will detract from the value of any fur. The last thing Mr. Avery did was to cut away unwanted skin at the bottom of the stretched hide to form a hole called a sight window through which a potential buyer can see the fur he is buying. This is necessary because the correct way for a hide to cure is to be tacked to the board inside out with the skin side showing. Proper curing will take several days.

From wild animal to fur coat, there is a lot of hard work involved long before the fur ever gets to the sewing machine, and most of that work is done by people like Mr. Kirby Avery, a man whose skill with a pocket knife and an animal's hide is unquestionable.

*Fresh caught otter,
bobcat.*



Brushing fur.



First cut along tail.



Peeling the hide.



*Removing fat and grease, hide pulled over
fleshing beam.*

*Rubbing corn meal
into hide.*



*"Popping" hide to
remove corn meal.*



*Tacking hide down
onto stretching
board.*



*Finished product,
fur visible
through window
cut in hide.*

Baseball in Beaufort County-- An Old Timer Remembers



*Mr. Cecil Slade--still ready to bunt a man
down.*

Article by Gary Slade

Cecil Slade is in his middle seventies now, many years past the time of his playing prime when he was one of the best baseball pitchers in Beaufort County, or, for that matter, eastern North Carolina. But his memory of the grand old game, the American pastime, is fresh and vital.

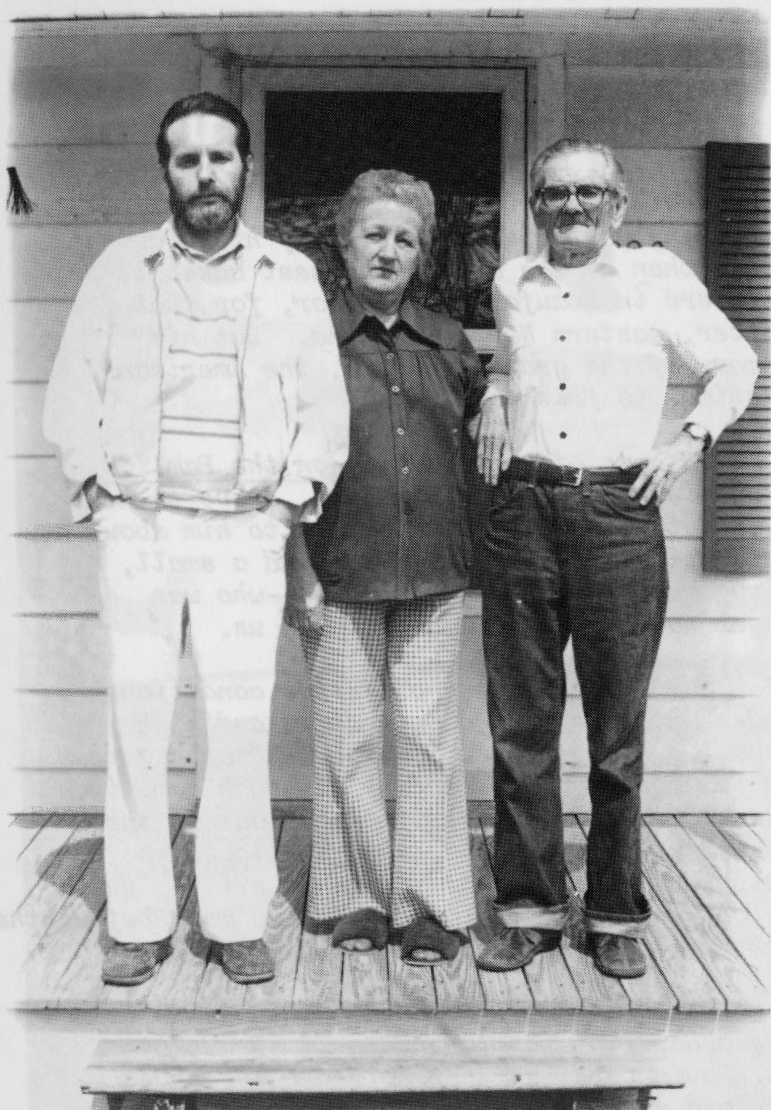
So some of us from Life on the Pamlico, including Mr. Slade's son Gary, drove to his Washington, N. C., home to talk to him about his activities in baseball. We found a small, wiry man--pleasant and animated--who was eager to share his memories with us.

He told us of the primitive conditions under which he played in grammar and high school. He told us of the early "match games" in Beaufort County. Before one such game in the 1920s, a bootlegger took him out in the woods and gave him a drink. He played so well that the man showed him his still. But, unfortunately, Mr. Slade drank too much before the next game and was unable to play.

He told us of the great ballplayers from the area, from the legendary Jim Brown of St. Louis Cardinal fame to the Perry boys, Gaylord and Jim, from Williamston.

Most of all he told us of his love for the old game and for the men who played it long ago.

Baseball in



Gary Slade with his mother and father.

I was born and raised in Pamlico County, a little place called Whortonsville, yessir, just a little hole in the road. I played high school in a place you might've heard of-- Stonewall. That's where I finished school at was at Stonewall. In high school we didn't play anything except basketball and baseball. Didn't mess with football whatsoever then.

Did you have some real good coaches there that helped you, that taught you how to play?

Well, yes, sir. I had some. In elementary school, just the principal, you know. [We were] just a bunch of small kids, you know. He kind of looked after organization. When I went to Stonewall to high school, at that time the agricultural teacher was the coach and manager of the high school team, see. He trained me through that.

In the early 20s, during and just after his highschool days, Mr. Slade told about one of the most impressive pitchers he ever saw.

Before I come here [Washington] from where I come from we won the county championship. There we had a man, and there's never been a man in the big leagues could throw a ball no harder 'n he could. He was the only man I've ever been afraid of.

What was his name?

Roland Styron. He was from Pamlico County, Hobucken.

What kind of style of pitching did he have that made him so good?

Well, it was overpowering speed. You couldn't get up to that plate. You were in danger if you dug in. Sometimes you could set your spikes on certain pitchers, but you couldn't do it with him 'cause he was fast. He went to Richmond to try out with Richmond and he got up there and he said he could make more money at home selling fish--at that time, you know. He didn't care whether he played or not.

Another ballplayer impressed Mr. Slade at this time.

One team in Pamlico County, they called Messic, North Carolina, and they were the most balanced team I've ever seen. I mean they all loved to play ball, and the old story was told down there one year that they weren't going to have ball down there that year. Of course, it [Messic] was just a hole in the road, see, and they said that the man planted his crops [where they played]. And the boys tore it up and made a ballpark out of it anyhow. That's what was told. I don't know if it was true.

They had a man [at Messic] that I honestly believe could've caught just as good as any New York Yankee could, and he could hit that ball! He still holds the record in New Bern, North Carolina, hitting the longest ball that's ever been hit in New Bern.

What was his name?

His name was Joe Morris. He was a catcher.

How good was he?

Oh, goodness, you better not try to ever leave anywhere off first base! You were in

danger of being picked off first base! He stayed cocked and ready all the time. And I never saw anybody steal second off him.

He threw it real strong?

Yes. His brother Will was a pitcher, and he pitched to him and he had good control. And B. Carawan, he was the one played shortstop, and I never seen a man faster on shortstop than he was. And all the rest of 'em--they had nine good men. Now Hobucken, where I was just talking about Roland, they just had an average crew. I mean, you know, you were subject to see an error at anytime, but you didn't see no errors with Messic. I mean, I wouldn't say none. There might be one now and then, but it was very rare.

But Messic didn't have a pitcher as good as Roland Styron?

No, no. I think the reason he was so good--amongst us, of course, he had overpowering speed. In other words, there weren't nobody that dug in on him. I saw him hit a man at my home one time. It hit on the handle of the bat and hit him in the jaw. He had a time, you know.

Was he a real big fellow?

Well, no, he was about six feet, but he was muscled. I mean, he was all muscle!

Did he throw anything else besides the fast ball? Curve ball or anything?

I think he depended on his overpowering speed all the time. You got a certain place in the pitcher's box. Roland, he stood with his left foot on there and when he came over

with his windup, he stepped forward.

Was he left handed or right handed?

Right handed. Boy, did I love to play that stuff [baseball]. If he [Roland] had just had my will to play. He just didn't care a thing about it. I'd of went somewhere [with Roland's ability]. I don't know if I'd played or not, but I would've sure went!

Mr. Slade remembers that playing baseball at school was in sharp contrast to today's well-equipped little leaguers and high school players .

We kids, when we started going to school, we didn't have a baseball. We'd take socks, old socks, unravel 'em and put [fishing] net lead into 'em and wrap 'em and it was just as hard as a baseball. We had some bats and 'course some were home-made bats and stuff that people would make, you know.

The catcher was not well-equipped in those days.

Robert Horton caught for us, and he didn't have a thing but the mask and mitt, no chest protector nor knee guards. That was back in them days.

His high school team, Mr. Slade remembers, was one of the best ball clubs he ever played on.

I believe we had just as good a ball club in high school as they had in the Coastal Plains [league] because that Glen Woodard, you just couldn't get one by him. And we had a good steady ball club. They'd holler and tell me bring it out here, we want it out here, see!

After finishing high school in Stonewall, Mr. Slade moved to Washington, N. C. in 1928.

I came here after I was grown and married and went to Norfolk and came back, see. I've heard this story; now how true it was I don't know. But old man Kugler here was 'bout the wealthiest man in Washington then. And they built a field that's called Kugler Field out there, and they were having paid ball then. I never saw a game 'cause the field was already built and established when I came here, see, but they claimed they closed it because they didn't have enough attendance to pay the players. Now, that's the hearsay.

I had an uncle living here in Washington offered me a good job [in 1928] and I said, well, I'm not going back home, so here I've been ever since.

And then you got involved in the county baseball?

Well, they didn't have any county league then. Let me say this to you. In all fairness, it's what you call match games, you know. You might never heard of it in your time.

No.

Well, a match game is like this. In other words, say you're in Belhaven, and I'm here. And probably I'd say, we'll go down there and play a game, see, no league whatever. 'Course it would a mattered of whoever won, Belhaven or whether we won. And that's the way it was when I first came here. 'Course I played all over this county, everywhere back 'n forth.

Was there a fairly organized Washington

team, or did different people play at different times?

Then there wasn't no organized team.

So in match games you just sort of called up somebody, your special friends, and got together?

And played ball! It's just like I say: we were down here to Belhaven. Belhaven would play Washington, see, and we'd pick up the best players and all we could get and play down there in the afternoon. They might put in the paper the score and who won. I mean, there was no league or nothing at all. "Course anybody could play that could play ball.

Why don't you describe how one of these match games would be. How many fans would you have there and did you go on a bus?

We had cars to take the players and stuff. Like when we went to Aurora, well, we'd have enough cars to take all the players' stuff, and there'd be a few people that come early. See, they'd probably come down there to play and, of course, around Aurora all the people would gather around the field.

Would you have stands?

No, there wouldn't be any stands. There'd just be old plank seats, you know, like that, just around the edge. Most of 'em [fans] stood up. And then the way we'd take in for the gate anything, well, nobody got any pay, you know, for the play.

Did you have some kind of uniforms?

Not at first they wouldn't.

In those early games, you really just wore what you had?

That's right.

Did you have spikes then?

Oh yes!

But nobody paid to go to those match games?

No. I think, Captain, 'bout how hard times were. We didn't even have soft drinks. We would have a match game there at home when I played for Whortonsville. They'd get a barrel and make a barrel of lemonade, see, whole barrel of lemonade, and it was all free, you know. People would buy the lemons and sugar and stuff. I mean, you know, if anybody wanted to drink something. And the way it would be then, well, some of the people might take a hat and go around like in church, you know, and pick up where people wanted to give anything and whether they didn't. Wasn't too much to give in them days, tell you the truth.

About how many people would you have at the match games?

Well, I'd say somewheres around a hundred. 'Course [back] then there weren't nowhere hardly no money circulating. Nobody had automobiles like they have now, just a few people. I remember when I was a boy, there were two cars in the whole place where I lived. These people were kind of wealthy. That was back in the Model T days. Back in [those days] you didn't have too much way to go, unless you

went horse and buggy or horse and cart, stuff like that. But there wasn't nowhere to go. At least there was church, you know, but there weren't no where else to go.

'Course on Sunday people were so religious they didn't want you to play on Sunday down there [in Pamlico County].

Is that right? Sunday they didn't want you to play?

No, not down in the country. Now, we played Sundays here [Washington], and all now, but that was [after] having church and everything. And we wouldn't have our parks then; we didn't have fences around 'em, not where you were playing like that. They had, you know, foul ball lines, and all, left field and right field, where the ball was gonna go. But if a man hit it, if he hit it in fair territory, he could keep right on running long as the man didn't get the ball in. I tell you something I believe that's changed: there was more fighting and brawls. Oh, yes, sir! Was nothing to get in a fight! There used to be a Syrian over at my home who loved to fight at ballgames.

Why would a fight start? A disputed call?

Yes, something like that. See, one start up, and they'd get together and gang up and all, and they had some fist fights, stuff like that.

As we were talking about fights at the match ballgames, Mr. Slade remembered one involving a catcher. But he had a time remembering the man's name.

He was one of the best catchers I ever

saw, and he was just about the size of Joe Morris. And that was Charlie--what was his name? I'll think of it directly, captain. 'Cuse me, I'm thinking.

That's all right.

Charlie Elks! That was his name 'cause he was the one that I saw square off with Dupree Toler. You know, Dupree was a good fighter. He always loved to come around, you know, and start something. He was always going around having these gettogethers, you know, and fighting and everything. He was supposed to be one of the best men there was around 'cause he was pretty rugged.

We were playing ball and there weren't even no league over there and Charlie was catching. And Dupree came out there running his mouth, you know, inviting this one and that one and the other. And Charlie threw up his hand back of the plate to hold time, see, and pulled off his gear and confronted him. Dupree didn't bother him either.

He let him alone?

Yes, he let him alone 'cause Charlie was a lot bigger than Dupree. I mean, he was taller.

Despite his reluctance to discuss his own achievements, Mr. Slade told us what it took for a smaller fellow like him to succeed as a pitcher.

When you pitched, what was your best pitch?

Well, I tell you, Captain, my best pitch was an out drop.

Would that be like a curve?

Curve and drop too. I couldn't throw much of an in [drop]. I could break it a little bit but not too much. Well, at that time an out curve breaks in, see, and an in curve breaks out [a right handed pitcher throwing to a left handed batter]. And I could throw. It takes speed to throw one of them pretty well [in curve], and I didn't have too much speed. I never could throw one of them too well, but I could throw a good out curve and good out drop and a straight ball. Where I got mine [outs] was--not bragging on myself--I had perfect control. I had a catcher one time say he could hold that mitt anywhere he wanted to and I could throw the ball anywhere he signaled for it.

Would you study the hitters to know, to try to get a good idea what to throw to them?

Yes, sir. You had to, especially after you'd played 'em one or two times. You had to.

Would you do things like change speeds?

Not too much, no, sir, not too much. I, once in a while, tried to throw a knuckler, but I never was never very good at throwing a knuckle ball. I couldn't control it very well.

Unlike many pitchers, Mr. Slade was also a good hitter. He told us of an honor that an early coach gave him, an honor that few pitchers receive.

I had a lot of folks, when we were playing ball in Pamlico County, say good God Almighty, look at that kid out there on the mound.



Mr. Slade swung a pretty good bat for a pitcher.

And I was brought up pretty good. In fact, this man [his first coach, Mr. Johnson], he finished Mississippi College--he gave me a white sweater with that name on the back of it. I was asking my wife the other day whatever happened to that sweater. He loved me to death 'cause he trained me. I mean, talked to me and told me what to do. And I could throw them balls, and I'd listen pretty well. I loved to play so good!

He even had me batting second in the line up! The pitcher's always supposed to bat last, see, and I asked him what was the reason, but I was a pretty good bunter, see, but I weren't too good a runner. We had a boy--his nickname on the team was Hot Ziggety. And I don't believe any player on the Coastal Plains team could beat him playing shortstop, and he could throw, snap of his arm like that to first base. He didn't have to rare back. They put him as leadoff man, see, and I asked him, I said, "Mr. Johnson, why the hell you batting me in second place? You know I can't bunt and ever make it down to first base." He said, "You ain't got to make it down there." He said, "If you bunt the ball fair, Glenn will be on second base. They'll never get him!" Said, "Ain't nobody fast enough to get him." He said, "We'll be in scoring position and then the hitters come up and probably get him in!"

In his career as a ballplayer, Mr. Slade played with and against many outstanding baseballers in eastern North Carolina. His son Gary, himself a fine ballplayer, urged his father to pick an all star team from the area.

At one time I [Gary] had gotten him to pick an all star team. Do you remember those all star teams?

Yes, I remember some of 'em.

Would you pick Roland Styron as pitcher?

Well, I'd put him substitute pitcher. I'd put Joe Morris catching and his brother Will pitching. Will didn't have overpowering speed, but he had a lot more headwork than Roland had.

What was his main pitch?

Well, at that time probably an out curve.

Who would you put from Beaufort County?

Oh, Dominic Andreoli. He was a pitcher. He had a lot of speed, but I batted against him. In fact, I hit a homerun on him. I reckon he let me do it. He loved to play. He had other kinds of balls besides that, and he could throw next hardest to Roland as anybody I've seen. Fact, he went over there to New Bern and played in that Coastal Plains League, you know, years ago.

How about outfield?

You mean Beaufort County?

That's right.

Garbo Tetterton. I don't know what his real name is. He was a good runner and a good hard worker and all. The only thing about him, he was right smart-mouthy all the time.

Didn't you say something about Fred Potts?

Yes. Fred Potts didn't play much when I came around here. I don't know why. He was probably working or something another. Fred Potts played center field, and he was the best in Washington at that time.

He was real fast?

Yes, sir, he was fast enough that he could've played this Coastal Plains League all right if it'd been going at the time. Fred is a little bit older than I am. And I'm 75. Fred lives right here in Washington now. I see him occasionally. He was good, and they had a fellow down here at Core Point was another pitcher, Milan Nixon. He was just as good as Dominic. Only thing about it, he didn't have the headwork that Dominic had. I mean he just rared back and throwed it.

Coastal Plains League, that's a professional league?

Yes. That was professional. We never had it here. Like I say, it come to Greenville, Ayden, Kinston.

They [Washington] had a solid ballclub. They wasn't a man on there that couldn't play good ball. Now that Bill Whealton was an outfielder, and in later years he become a pitcher. He pitched for New Bern in Coastal ball. That's where Joe Morris was when he hit that ball while he was catching for New Bern. I believe he could've caught just as good as any major league catcher there was. He and his brother, they worked together, and I guess they knew each other pretty well. He was a big man too; he was probably 'bout 6'2" and,

being strong, he could throw that ball just like the pitcher threw it to him from the mound to second base.

Now, you saw some like Jimmy Brown and some of the Williamston players.

Them Morris boys were just as good as Jimmy Brown was. In fact, they were better 'cause they could hit the ball further. They got a plaque up there now says longest ball ever hit in New Bern Park, see, and that was Joe Morris I was telling you about. He was a catcher.

Who was the toughest guy you pitched against to get out?

I'd say Garland Edwards.

What was so difficult about him?

Well, he was a good ballplayer. He played good ball, and he could tag it pretty well.

He have a good eye?

Yes, sir.

If your control wasn't quite right on a pitch, he'd pop it?

That's right.

What if something was a little bit out of the strike zone?

Well, he had a pretty good eye for that. See, in other words, he didn't do too much swinging like a lot of 'em would. He was 'bout as good as I pitched against.

Did you ever see Gaylord and Jim Perry play?

Oh, yes! Yes, sir, we went over there [Williamston] to a game to see them play. That boy pitched that day, and Williamston, they really tore that other team up. I forget what the team was, good ballplayers. I seen them pitch. They're good ballplayers!

When I first come around here, their daddy was a pitcher. But he just pitched in this Beaufort County League. I can't think of his name. The old man was a good pitcher, their daddy, in this kinda ball. Now I don't know what he'd a been in higher [leagues] like them boys are.

I[Gary] want you to tell us a little bit about Jimmy Brown He played for the Cardinals in the World Series, didn't he?

Yes.

Was he from around here? He's from Bath, isn't he?

He was from Jamesville, I think. But he lived at Bath for a while.

But what I was wondering was what kind of player was he. You saw him play, and I didn't.

Well, I saw him play in Williamston. He was outstanding. In other words, he could play shortstop for 'em, and he was just as good as you'd see anywhere. Nothing didn't get away from him unless it was completely clean hit, see.

Real fast?

Yes, he was real fast.

Was he a small fellow or big?

Well, he was a medium sized man, I'd say.

What kind of hitter was he?

He was damn good. He wasn't no home run hitter, but he got a lotta hits. And that counts for a ballclub too, when you got somebody that can hit, and they can kind of spray hit if the pitch is not too bad. I've seen hitters could do that, I mean, if the pitcher's not too strong. Now if you got a stronger pitcher, you got to hit wherever you can, but sometimes a pitcher ain't that strong.

You say that if a pitcher is not that good, you can hit the ball where you want to?

In most cases, yes, sir.

Jimmy Brown was that kind of hitter?

Yes, sir.

After his playing days, Mr. Slade remained active in the game. With his good friend Harvey Wright, he managed and coached in the local county league.

Gary was telling me that you did coaching later on in the county league here in the 1950s.

Yes. I had a manager with this league here, Harvey Wright.

Did you coach too?

Well, Harvey Wright was mostly the coach. And I was the manager. Infact, I got the club together. It was just like the Coastal Plains League. You were allowed to carry just so many players, see.



Cecil Slade (right) and Harvey Wright with their county league team--1950s.

What teams were in the league?

Belhaven, Douglas Crossroads, Washington, Pinetown, Everett's Crossroads, Aurora, Old Ford.

This was in the 50s?

Yes.

Then, you started working with younger players?

Yes, sir. Well, my boy [Gary] played on there too, see. I was way past the age to play then.

How did you enjoy working with younger players?

Oh, Lord! I got the best kick out of that! I went down here to Vanceboro, below Vanceboro, and got a brother battery, just as good as, better than, anything. Got a brother battery to play for us. They signed up, and then I found a boy at Bayboro, North Carolina, and he was offered to go to Florida to try out for a major league team. I had him, and Robert, a pitcher, and Milan--you know how good Milan was--for a catcher. He was the best catcher in the circuit.

What give me the laugh so good, Bobby Andrews [another manager in the league] loved to play good as I did. But he was mouthy, so that night when we were signing up in the league, he said, "I swear! What you getting in our league for?" Said, "Don't you know you ain't got nothing to even compare with we boys!" I said, "Well, we'll see. Somebody's got to get beat. Might as well be us."

Ha, ha, ha!

All them ballplayers, the boys that come from down there [Bayboro]--one couldn't talk plain, played shortstop for us, Shady Ray. And we had a team there! And Milan was just as good as that Joe Morris was. You'd better not look like you wanted to go to second base on him, and he could hit the long ball. He was a long ball hitter!

And we went there. Other words, we were winning games right along. So we went out here to Old Ford to play a game. And they went over here to E.C.U. [East Carolina University] and got a pitcher and one or two other players over there. They told us that day, "We got your number now." I said, "Might as well be me. Somebody's got to lose." I think we beat 'em six to one. I know Milan hit one over right field fence. Seems to me it was six to one. We did! We had a good solid ball club. Every position. And these boys here were good hitters.

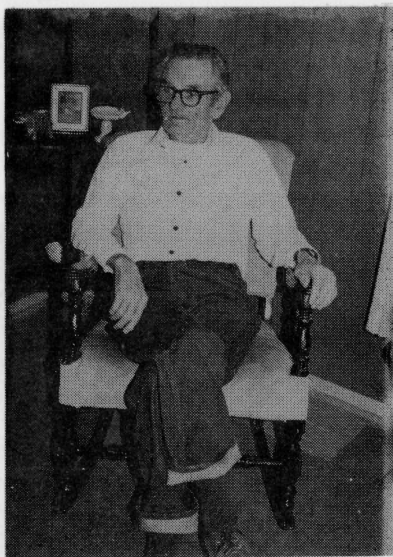
Who was this team you beat? Where were they from?

Oh, they were right in this community, Old Ford. But they would go to Greenville and pick up a player. We were allowed to pick up who we wanted. Douglas Crossroads down here, this Roy Sullivan out there, he was a big boy and a good ballplayer. And they had a team pretty well matched us. They had them two brothers, Morgan and Terry Harris. They had a good ball club. Pete out here, Pete Winstead played for them. They had a good ball club.

At the end of the series we went down to Pinetown, and Pinetown had a good ball club.

They all had a good ball club, but I just had a little more ball club than they did. And

"I wish I was as good a Christian as I was a ballplayer."



we come out on top. Had the playoffs and stuff. And we won the series that year. But this boy Mickey Smith was playing for Old Ford. And Mickey was a darn good ballplayer. He hit a homerun off'n this boy that had a chance of going up [to the majors]. And I called him outside and talked to him a little. He said he won't do it no more, said that's the last time. In fact, I don't think Mickey ever got a hit off'n him after that first time. He just threw the ball, you know, and Mickey was pretty good.

At the conclusion of our talk with Mr. Slade, it was obvious to us all that he has a genuine love for the great American game of baseball. However, his final remark to us suggests that baseball is not the only thing in his life nor, indeed, the most important thing. He said, "I wish I was as good a Christian as I was a ballplayer."

Mr. "Tee Wee" Blount Describes the Jamesville Easter Monday Herring Festival



Mr. Blount demonstrates his cheese cutter for Michael and Janice.

Article by Janet Simpson and Michael Williams

Introduction by Michael Williams

If you head west from the college down Highway 264, turn right on Lizzard Slip, left on the Old Bath Highway, right on the Lodge Road, go straight down the Cherry Road, turn right on North Market Street Extension, and take Highway 171, you will end up in the town of Jamesville. That is what I call taking the backroads, and on this particular Friday I directed Dr. Armstrong through these narrow, winding, scenic roads, where some farmers could be seen already transplanting the tobacco plants, to Jamesville. There we turned left at the stoplight and met Janet at the Friendly Grocery Store to talk with store owner Mr. "Tee Wee" Blount, a self-confident man with an old-fashioned GI haircut, who calls you by name and looks you in the eye when he talks to you.

Janet lives in Jamesville and she knows "Tee Wee," but it was the first time Dr. Armstrong and I had been to the store, and we were truly amazed at this country store, which looked like it contained everything from A to Z and back again. There were machetes (large knives used for chopping through underbrush), a block of cheese, hats of all kinds, tools, jeans, hip boots, and many nuts, bolts, and screws.

When Mr. Blount returned from lunch, the four of us adjourned to the storeroom where "Tee Wee" proceeded to tell us interesting stories about his life, the store, and the annual Easter Monday herring festival.



Mr. Tee Wee's store.

Leaning back in an old wooden-framed chair, Mr. Blount laughingly told us that he began working at the store in 1935 for a weekly salary of \$7.

I had worked here maybe 12 months, and the owner decided that I ought to have a little raise. So he agreed to let me have two cokes a day, which was ten cents--they were five cents each--and three packages of cigarettes a week; they were 25¢ each. I worked this way until 1941. I got a job at Williamston in the Central Service Station, making \$20.00 a week.

When the man tried to hire me for working at the service station, I asked him how much could he pay me. He said \$20.00 a week, and I said you can't pay that much money [laughing]! I didn't think there was that much money in the world! Yes, sir!

So I've been happy, Roy, and I think this is the thing in life--that if you can get over to anybody if he's doing what he's happy with regardless whether he's a ditch-digger or what, don't bother him. I hadn't made nearly the money that a lot of people have, but I guarantee you one thing: I have been happier than anybody. I've raised three children and two of them went to Greenville [East Carolina University], and one of them went to [N. C.] State. At times it was hard, but the Lord will provide. He sure will, and I'm mighty happy. I've got five grandchildren, and my son the 15th of last month [March] got married in Hawaii. That just goes to show a little bull can go a long ways [laughing]!

We want to talk some more to you about the store, but how about telling us about the herring festival that's held here in Jamesville in the spring.

Of course. The herring have been here, and at one point of the game it was a sur-

vivor, and I think this is about as far back as you want to go. It was a must in the early days. We had no transportation really and just about didn't have any money. We were using due bills mostly, and every farmer and nearly every person in eastern North Carolina put up a barrel of herrings. Depending on how big the family was was how many herrings he'd put up.

Easter Monday as a rule is always the height of the herring season. It's along in the middle, and, of course, Easter is a holiday and everybody would come to Jamesville. Actually, if he didn't want to buy any herrings, he'd watch the fishery that we had across the river. They would buy the herring and go home and corn them and wait until next year to come to Jamesville, a whole lot of them.

But as time went on, the highways began to come in, and in, I think, 1927 [was] when this one came through here. And people began to have more money, and we didn't have to have herrings anymore to survive. They would just come down to look at the scene.

The Ruritan Club here, which is the only civic organization that small communities have, we organized somewhere around in '57 or something like that, we would go down to the river and have a hotdog stand and try to boost up this herring gathering. At one year we even had a little Ferris wheel at the top of the hill for the children. Then we began to give away a prize pig and try to create some excitement here since they were not buying herring. They would come look at the fishery for a while.

But this past Easter is no exception of the crowd gathering here. It's grown each year, but they've done a lot of advertising. I think

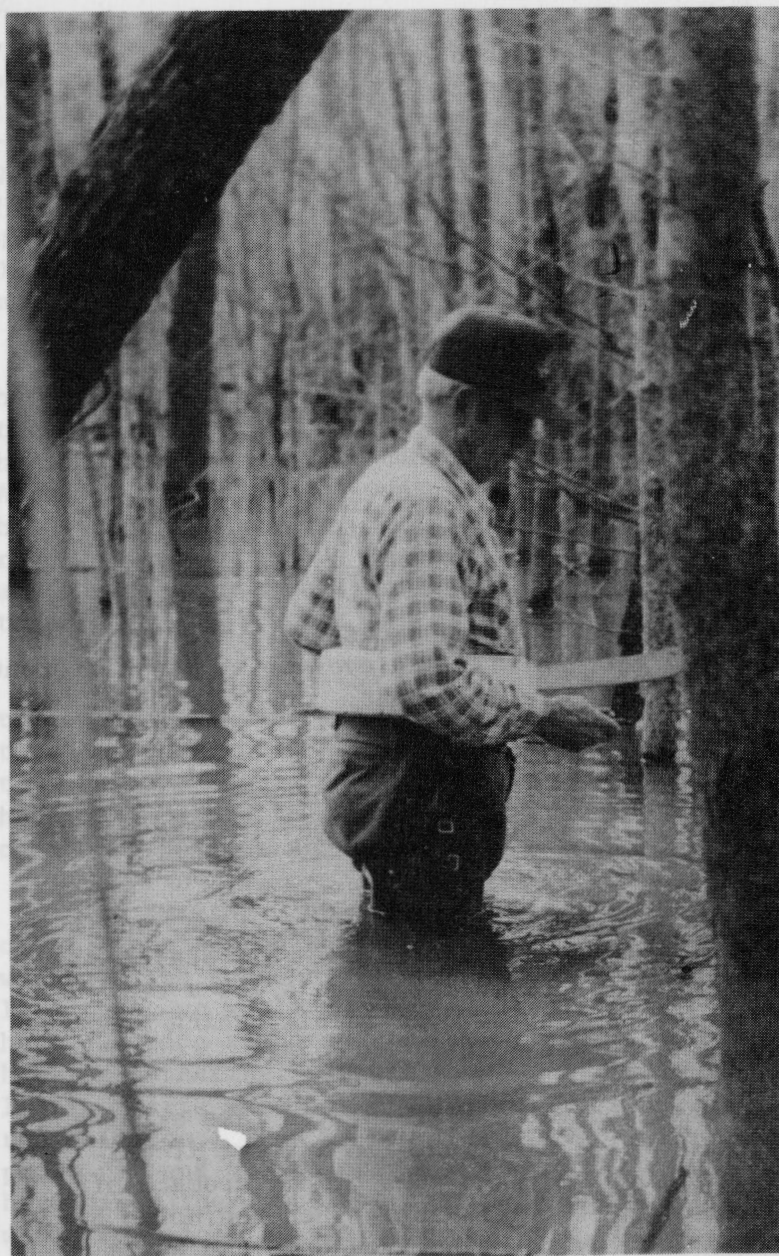
that we had more people here at one time Easter Monday than we've had any two years put together. Now, of course, this is just a guess, but every available spot in the side streets and in the town parking lots and all was filled up with cars. A boy down at the river has got a long trailer that he just disconnects, and he got a country grass band and the one on the Cypress Grill side had the same thing except he didn't have the truck. They play music, drink a little liquor, and catch little fish and have a big time. I really think it's a good thing, and where it's going to wind up we don't know.

How about telling us about the herring as compared to other fish, like the size of it and how it tastes and the way you cook them.

Roy, that's a good question. Everything that you get, animals and everything, is different; hogs and beef are different. So are fish. This herring is a delicate fish. He doesn't eat many solid foods, and at one time, we didn't think he ate anything, but sporters [fishermen] are beginning to find baits that they actually will bite.

He's around a pound at full grown, and I told you he was real delicate. His scales will come off really easy. He's got a real tremendous amount of bone in him, which prepared right it doesn't bother you to eat.

When you get him fresh, you take a knife and cut behind his front fin and cut it all the way down and take some of his stomach off and rake the entrails out. Then you notch him. What I mean by notching, you take the knife and lay the fish down flat and cut to the backbone about a half an inch apart all the way down and turn him over and do the same thing. You put



Mr. Tee Wee in quest of the herring.

him in deep fat and fry him good and crisp. Not like a cracker, but good and done. This will eliminate any bone you may get besides the backbone. You can eat all of the bone.

Now, I told you a while ago about surviving; you corn him. What I mean about corn is that you put salt on him, and this salt protects him from spoiling and when you get ready to, you keep him that way for about two weeks. A lot of blood or some blood will come out, and you pour this water off and repack him. They call it repacking. You put a layer of salt, then a layer of fish. Then after you get him to the top, you make a pickle. You fill a bucket full of salt and then fill it up with water, which fixes this brine. It's called a salt brine. You put this so it will float an egg. I don't know if you're familiar with this or not.

No.

When you're in salt water, you float much easier than you can in fresh water. Have you ever tried that, Roy?

Yes, right.

Well, the same thing is true in this. You take the salt and make a brine strong enough so it will float the egg high. Then you know you've got it. You pour this brine right over the salt and the herring, and if you'll keep him in a cool place, this is enough to last you six to twelve months or until you've eat the entire body of herring. Some people put molasses in them, in the brine. Some people put pepper on top. I always get a screen wire and put it to keep off the flies because when they get to it, they'll mess it up. They can lay eggs on it and cause them to have bugs,

and, of course, you've got to throw the whole thing out.

Do you think they're about as good as any fish to eat?

Yes. He's an oily fish. He doesn't taste like a brim or a bass. He's got an individual taste that no other fish has, and that's true with fresh or corned. Now, some fish are not as good corned. We've tried white perch corned here, and they've tried some rock but in salt water. They corn a spot and a mullet and this herring is also used.

They call it a "blind robin" in beer gardens. They take it after they corn it and smoke it. They serve it with beer or eat it just like it is, not cooking it at all.

Now, we've talked about cooking the herring fresh, but I haven't told you anything about cooking him corned. After he's corned for a week, well, it does take but a few days for him to really stripe. After this if you're going to fry him, I like to soak him overnight, and the more times you change the water, the fresher he gets. You soak him overnight and change the water at least two times.

Now, I've got six herrings, and I want to soak them out. I'll take a dishpan and fill it up with regular water and put these in, and maybe I'll change the water two or three times during the night. And the next day anytime he's ready to take out and drain him and meal him and put him in deep fat. No bone bothers you at all in this. You don't have to notch him. A lot of people filet him while he's green, and this is really the best method. And when you get ready to cook him, you haven't got to scale him or anything. All you have to

do is soak him and put him in meal and, of course, then a hot frying pan. He is delicious!

I've never had herring, but I'm going to try that. I've heard that it's really good. The season of the year that they run is not that long, is it?

No. We've got one cafe here. I mentioned to you about the Cypress Grill. He opened up this year along the last week in February, and today is, what, the 22nd [of April]. Saturday night is his last night. After he closes, it's pretty well dead on the Roanoke River. They'll be a few folks that'll continue to catch fish.

Fresh caught herring for sale.



As the herring dwindle out and go back to sea, the rock fishermen are anxious to get them for bait. You cut them up, and they make wonderful rock bait or catfish, and they use them for trout lines.

We just don't have any bulk market. That's what went away with our fishery. We had a man from Cape Charles that came down and leased this fishery from the original owners, and he ran it for a couple or three years and he sold them, and he got a market for the herring. They would put them in big baskets and freeze them and sell them next spring for crab bait. But this wasn't profitable, and since that dam has been upon us, it just raises the water height to the height that we couldn't run a fishery anyway.

When was the fishery here?

This stayed here for years and more years, and at one time we had two fisheries in Plymouth and one in Cam Point, which is halfway between here and Plymouth. And, of course, the one right across the river and around the bend was another one. We had five fisheries on the Roanoke River, and I've seen them over at our fishery here catch an estimated 75,000 herrings at one time. That's a whole lot of fish!

Yes! Let us ask you a little bit about your store. How's it changed over the years?

Well, do you mean how did I fit it into the program?

Yes.

Well, it was owned and operated by a fellow named Clarence Sexton. For years he and myself ran it, and when we were taken away in World

War II, his wife and Skillet Long's wife ran it. Of course, three years or so later, why, the war was all over and we came back. I went to Williamston with the Williamston Peanut Company weighing peanuts.

Sexton and myself always got along fine together, and he came up and offered me a proposition that if I'd come back to him he'd give me part of the business. Since I like this very much, of course, I jumped at the idea, and we came back again and started as partners. We got along fine, of course. I believe I mentioned a while ago that we didn't make a lot of money, but we were able to keep the wolf off the door. Finally he decided he wanted to put all his time in farming, so Frost Martin and myself bought him out. We stayed in business 17 years.

How have the merchandise and the wants of the customers changed?

You know, that's a good question. At one time we had a family out here that was a tenant farmer, and they had somewhere around seven or eight children, I'm not sure. We ran them one year: household, kitchen, furniture needs. Now, they had their own meat and their own garden, but we furnished kerosene, smoking tobacco, chewing tobacco, if there's any, cigarettes and shoes once in a while for the children, overalls and what have you and piece goods for the entire family for less than \$300.00.

Is that right!

But you asked about what kind of groceries. Standing order just about when you see a customer coming, surely you wanted to go get 10 pounds of flour, and if it was a big family,

you'd get him 25 pounds of flour, a four-pound bucket of lard and a five-pound bag of meal and some side meat. Now this was just about what every customer brought and then you'd ask him what else. Of course, at that time we sold molasses. I buy it now in a five gallon container, but then I bought it in a 50 gallon drum. It's made over in Wilmington, North Carolina, called Coverton's Extra Fancy. I'd sell two of them a year; now I sell maybe three to five five gallons. So that's how much that's fallen down.

Now, this is what I was telling you about a while ago when we just about didn't have any money. We used due bills. When the pulp mill came here, they were a different company from the one now, but it was still the same thing. They started paying about \$2.00 an hour, and this same man I was telling you about decided he ought to quit farming and go on day labor. So we figured it out if he worked 365 days, that's everyday around the clock at \$2.00 an hour, he made more money in share-farming that year than he would make working at the pulp mill. That's not saying anything about his rent, wasn't saying anything about his garden that I mentioned to you and his hog pen and things like that.

Another thing that would be of interest to you would be that you didn't get fried chicken [except] only in the spring of the year. I can well remember when I'd set a crate out in the front, and we'd put anywhere from three to ten frying size chickens and he wouldn't weigh but two pounds, feathers and all. You'd sell him for a dollar a piece, and then you'd have to go home and clean him and pick him. You'd lose about a third. But, anyhow, comparing it with today's earnings, I sold ten chickens a week then, and now I'm one of three more

merchants in town, and I've ordered two cases, which are 40 pounds a piece. Yes, 40 pounds to the case. Now, you can sell them for 49¢ a pound, which you get a chicken dressed and drawn ready for the frying pan for a dollar, but you had to pay a dollar for him on the hoof.

Yes.

A drastic change. Another change is that time has gone on, Roy. The man no longer buys things for the house. In the time I'm telling you, 95% or more of anything that was carried to the home was carried by the man.

Is that right?

Yes, sir, it is. He'd come to town on Saturday for two things. The last one was to buy groceries. And you can imagine what the first one would be [laughing]! And we were talking about the hours now. We opened up along about 6 o'clock; that was everyday including Sunday. Sunday we may wait 'til seven to open up, but we didn't have an ice box, no refrigeration, and people that buy meats on the weekends, Saturday night as I was telling you, we would pack them in this ice box and he'd come back and get them Sunday morning. That was one of the first highlights that I could remember was when a man got enough money to buy a nickel's worth of ice for dinner.

Really?

Oh, indeed, that's the truth! "Bout the only way you could keep your milk was to put it in the well bucket and lower it in the well. I know you've heard of that.

No. I hadn't heard of that. That's the way they kept it cool?

That's the only way you kept it, and when you built an ice box, you'd fill it up with sawdust. Just when you got enough money to buy 50¢ worth of ice, you put it in there and you'd put it five or six inches deep in sawdust and wrap it up just like it was going out of style. Another drastic change has been, I was telling you about the man bought the groceries then. Now the women does 99% of the buying, including buying for her husband. We sold men's shirts, overalls and dungarees and work shoes and dress shoes and even carried ladies' shoes and some underwear and things like that. But the children no longer buy from a place like this.

The style changes every few months. Dungarees, for instance. We'll go back to that. At that time there was just one dungaree, overall. It was the same thing five years from now as it was today. But today they have little legs one 30 days and tight pants and the next day it's big legs and tight pants. The stitches are different on on the pocket, and you've got to have the right stitch at the right time. Television sells a lot of it.

We never wear out clothes anymore. The time that I was telling you about, you just about wore out patches before it was all over [laughing]! You wore patch on top of patch.

It really has changed, hasn't it?

Well, some of it is much better. You had time to go visit then. I think this is the thing we miss a whole lot. Jamesville, Martin County, or Eastern North Carolina is changed

the least of anywhere else.

Conclusion by Janet Simpson

Even though I've known Mr. Tee Wee all my life, I'm still amazed by him. He seems to be knowledgeable about practically everything. He can always tell you something about a subject that you weren't aware of. He gave us a very interesting talk about herring, the festival here in Jamesville, and the way life was a while back, especially in his store. No matter what your age or interests, Mr. Tee Wee seems to know something you'd be interested in. I consider myself lucky to have known this remarkable man.

Mr. Tee Wee displays pipe joint he had to cut from child's neck.



A Concise History of Ocracoke Island

By Kevin Cutler

I have called Ocracoke Island home since the summer of 1976. During this time I have come to love the island and its people, and I've developed an interest in the history of Ocracoke.

The following is a short, general history of the island. I hope this story will convey to you, the reader, some of the features of life on Ocracoke that make it unique.

I am proud to be a transplanted "O'Cocker," and encourage you to visit us sometime.

The island of Ocracoke lies about thirty miles off the North Carolina mainland. It is accessible by ferry from three areas: Cedar Island in Carteret County, Swan Quarter in Hyde County, and Hatteras Island in Dare County. In addition, a small airstrip is available for private planes.

Ocracoke has been called the most romantic of all the islands and towns on the Outer Banks. Unlike many other areas, it has escaped much of

the modernization and development of today. It is for this reason, and for the natural beauty of the island, that many people visit Ocracoke each year. The fishing is excellent, and miles of unspoiled beaches offer swimming areas and sea shells to delight any collector.

Once known as Wokokon (the name is of Indian origin), the island first appeared on an early map from the Sir Walter Raleigh expeditions between 1584 and 1587. It has been discovered that the first white settlers on American soil stopped at what is now Ocracoke before continuing north to Roanoke Island where the first English colony was established.

One of the island's major claims to fame was the infamous pirate Edward Teach, or Blackbeard. So named because of his rich, black mane, the pirate terrorized the coast of North Carolina between 1716 and 1718. But his pirating came to an end in 1718 when Lt. Robert Maynard of the British Navy engaged Blackbeard and his crew in a fierce battle in a channel just off the island. Fighting was nothing new to the pirates, and may a life had been extinguished by the blood-thirsty buccaneer. But this time luck was on the side of Maynard and his men. Blackbeard was captured and beheaded, with his head being carried on to Virginia as proof that the pirate was dead. One colorful legend has it that the body was thrown overboard into the waters of the Pamlico Sound, where it proceeded to swim around the ship several times before sinking beneath the surface.

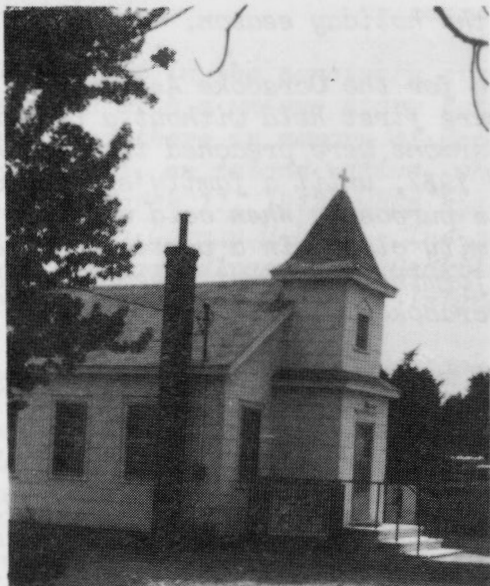
Although Blackbeard has been dead for over 250 years, his memory lives on. Rumors still circulate that he buried treasure beneath the sands of the island, but none has been found or,

at least, reported. Visitors to the island are enthralled by the play "A Tale of Blackbeard," which was written by island resident Julia Howard. The play, cast with mostly local performers, concerns the last days of the pirate's life. The drama has much singing and dancing and is well worth a trip to Ocracoke.

The village of Ocracoke, located at the southern end of the island, is a small, quaint town nestled around Silver Lake, known locally as "the creek." Since the island is small, you can walk or ride bikes while out sightseeing. In addition, a local restaurant serves as the station for the Ocracoke Trolley, a tour bus that visits the many sites of historical interest found in the area. Since the tour does offer a history of the island, it is educational; even many "locals" who have taken the tour learned something new about their town.

Perhaps the most famous of the trolley's stops is the Ocracoke lighthouse. Built between 1823 and 1824, the lighthouse is the shortest in North Carolina (only 75 feet high) and one of the oldest in continuous service on the Atlantic Coast. As is the purpose of any lighthouse, the Ocracoke beacon serves as a marker for ships at sea, allowing the captains to stay on course and veer away from the treacherous shoals. Today, the beam of the lighthouse glows over the village and furnishes a sense of security to those who call Ocracoke home.

Of particular interest are the island's two churches: the Assembly of God Church and the United Methodist Church. Religion is an important part of an "O'Cocker's" life, and the Christmas programs presented in each church are eagerly awaited with the



Assembly of God Church.



United Methodist Church.

approach of the holiday season.

Services for the Ocracoke Assembly of God Church were first held without a proper building. Sermons were preached in the school-house around 1937, until a family's yard was used for this purpose. When cold weather came, the family closed in a portion of their porch, thus forming the first Assembly of God Church for Ocracoke Island.

A church was constructed about 1940 by men and boys of the congregation. It wasn't until 1947, however, that a parsonage was built. At this time, the church received lumber from the old Pamlico Inn, destroyed during a hurricane three years earlier, and a permanent home for pastors was completed. The following year the naval base donated one of its old buildings to the church, and this was attached to the rear of the structure for use as Sunday School classrooms.

When the old parsonage was destroyed by fire in late 1954, the present house was built with insurance money and donations from local residents. During the 1970s, the exterior of the church was repaired, Sunday School rooms remodeled, and carpeting installed in the church sanctuary and parsonage.

The present Ocracoke United Methodist Church was dedicated on July 4, 1943. With the establishment of this church two congregations were joined: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Wesley Chapel, Methodist Episcopal Church. Lumber from these two churches was used to construct the new building, and various pieces of furniture and materials

were installed.

On a table in the sanctuary stands a wooden cross with a unique story behind it. It was placed there in memory of Capt. James Baughm Gaskill, an island native, who lost his life on March 11, 1942, when his ship was destroyed by a German U-boat. The cross was constructed from salvage from Gaskill's ship that washed ashore on Ocracoke Island.

After the naval base at Ocracoke was evacuated following World War II, one of its wooden buildings was moved onto the church grounds for use as a fellowship hall. This structure continues to serve many purposes, including dinners, meetings, and wedding receptions.

A pottery workshop, built in 1975 as a gift from two families, has provided many hours of enjoyment for creative adults and children.

Education is another important part of life on Ocracoke. To answer a question often posed to island residents: yes, we do have a school. In fact, the first school on Ocracoke Island was founded over a hundred years ago for children whose fathers were in the Life Saving Service.

A rivalry later began between the residents of the south side of Silver Lake and the north side. Two schools were then put into operation, and although one school was moved during a storm, this rivalry continued for some time.

A building called the "Lodge" was used as a schoolhouse in the early 1900's. While classes were held downstairs, the upper floor

was used as the "Odd Fellow's Hall." Today, with two wings added, the lodge serves as the center of the Island Inn.

Public school was held at the lodge until a new school was built near the present Methodist Church in 1917. One teacher who taught in this school was Selma Wise Spencer. A native of Pamlico County, Mrs. Spencer had previously taught in that area and Alamance County before coming to Ocracoke in the fall of 1930. At this time, she remembers, there were between 80-90 students at the school. Mrs. Spencer also points out that there was no high school before this time; students either terminated their education after the seventh grade or enrolled in boarding schools on the mainland. Many went to the Washington Collegiate Institute in Beaufort County; some went to Vanceboro, and one father sent his daughters to a boarding school in the western part of the state.

The first graduating class of Ocracoke School received their diplomas in 1931; at this time there were three seniors. Mrs. Spencer remembers that the boys who graduated either joined the Coast Guard or worked on the water. This is still true of many of the male graduates. Some, but not many, continued on to college, and Mrs. Spencer is proud of the fact that quite a few became teachers themselves.

As for this early school structure, Mrs. Spencer says that rain water was a problem as it tended to wash the sand away from the foundation. So, during the depression, men were hired to move sand from a nearby dune to place around the school. The school had a cistern with a water pump inside the building.

The county provided coal for the stove in winter, but the students had to gather sticks and twigs to start the fire. The responsibility of keeping the stove burning fell to the older boys. Mrs. Spencer also points out that the students had to purchase their own textbooks, as these were not provided by the state then as they are now.

Mrs. Spencer taught at Ocracoke for 24 years; she served as principal for two years during this time. She remembers that there were only two years she didn't teach: one, when her mother was ill and the year she and her late husband built their home. She married Benjamin E. Spencer, a native of the island, in 1934. The ceremony took place in his aunt's home, and the house still stands a short distance down the road from where Mrs. Spencer now lives.

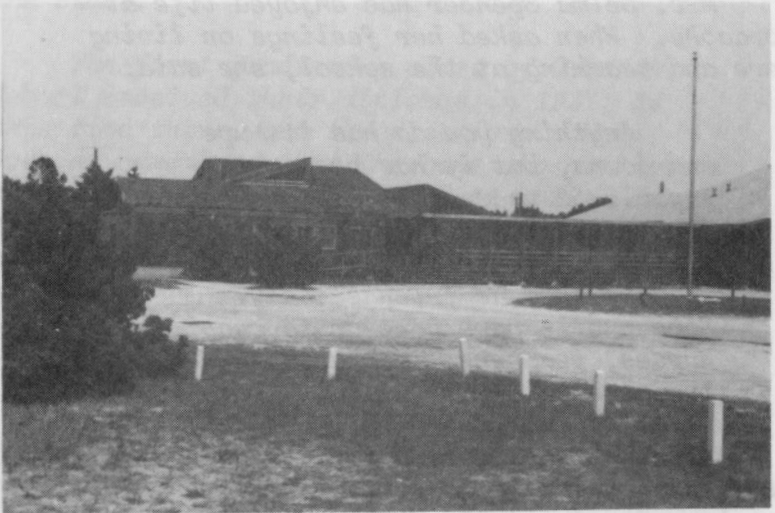
Mrs. Selma Spencer has enjoyed life at Ocracoke. When asked her feelings on living here and teaching at the school, she said:

Anything you do has its ups and downs, but it has been an enjoyable 52 years. It has been a joy to see many of my former pupils succeed in their professions and to have them as friends today. Some pupils have gone on to become nurses, teachers, merchants, and businessmen.

Although she retired from teaching in 1962, Mrs. Spencer has remained active. She has been invaluable to the Ocracoke United Methodist Church. Also, the present school is able to enjoy and benefit from this former teacher as Mrs. Spencer serves as a volunteer arithmetic aide for the younger students.

The main building for the current Ocracoke School was built in 1971, replacing the old structure. During construction, classes were held in the Methodist Church. Two trailers on the premises are also used for classes. A new gymnasium, completed in 1978, houses a classroom for kindergarten, grades one, and two, and a shop for maintenance class.

At the end of the 1982-83 school year there were approximately 120 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, and a faculty of sixteen, including principal, full- and part-time teachers, aides, secretary, and custodian. The school offers a full range of courses as well as extracurricular activities. Students participate in cheer-leading, softball, and basketball. The journalism class publishes a yearbook and newspaper and maintains a fully-equipped



Present School.

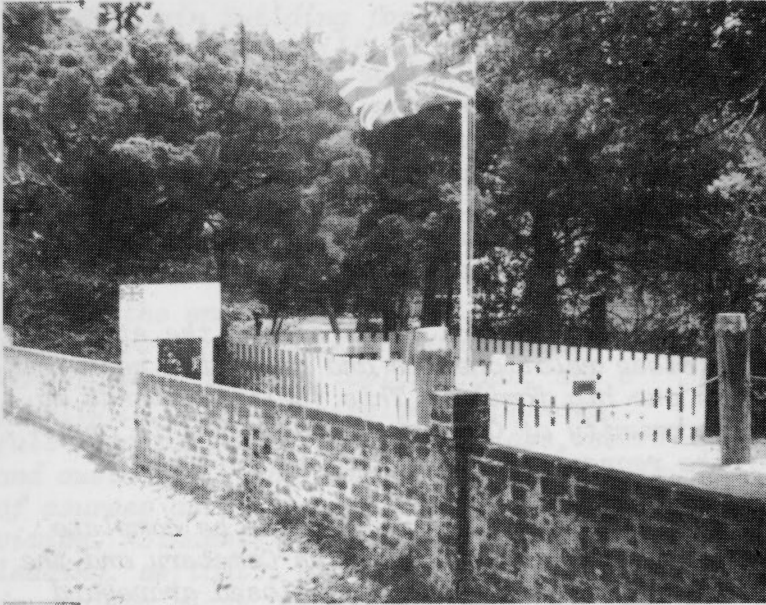
darkroom.

Annual events include the junior-senior prom and banquet, and the homecoming celebration. With the latter, graduates of Ocracoke School return for a barbecue dinner, basketball games, and the homecoming queen pageant when a high school girl is voted by her peers to reign over the next year's festivities.

Since the school is so small, the students form close relationships and are often referred to as one big family. This feeling extends to the community of Ocracoke, too. This is one of the reasons the community is unique.

No history of Ocracoke would be complete without mentioning the British Cemetery and the banker ponies. The small, enclosed graveyard sheltered with live oaks and cedars is the final resting place for four British sailors, killed when their ship, "HMS Bedfordshire," was destroyed in 1942. Their bodies were washed ashore, where two were identified. The identities of the other seamen remain a mystery today. The people of Ocracoke arranged a funeral service for the men, and land was donated for the cemetery by the Williams family. A ceremony is annually held to honor the sailors, and a flag of the British Empire is kept flying over the graves. The local Coast Guard Station maintains the tiny cemetery and provides flowers. The immaculate, white picket fence bears these lines: "If I should die think only this of me: that there's some corner of a foreign field that is forever England."

The banker ponies have been on Ocracoke for many decades. Various legends disagree on how they arrived on the island; one states that today's herd descends from two circus



British Cemetery.

horses that swam ashore when their ship went down during a journey between Havana and New York. Other tales place the ponies on the Outer Banks as a result of the expeditions of Spanish explorers, or were left behind with the mysterious disappearance of the settlers on Roanoke Island, now known as the Lost Colony.

The ponies once wandered at will about Ocracoke Island, but the coming of the automobile made this dangerous for these beautiful creatures. They were fenced in for their own safety, and are cared for by the National

Park Service. Today's herd numbers around twenty, and can be seen near the Hatteras ferry.

This article has discussed many topics: the island's school, churches, and other items of interest.

Ocracoke is unique and we hope to keep it that way. It has changed a bit since the early days, but it still offers the peacefulness and beauty it is known for. A preservation society was recently formed to help Ocracoke retain these qualities.

It is my hope that this story has given you some insight into life on the island. I hope, too, that it has shown that you don't need all those "extras" to enjoy life: the simple living and enjoyment of nature's beauty in all its glory is enough for me.



The Ocracoke lighthouse.