



Historically Speaking

Quarterly Newsletter 2021

january • february • march



Judges' Choice — *Three Stories of Fun Worthy of Whoville* by Charlotte Biercevicz, Shelton CT

Gingerbread!



People's Choice — *Delightful Village* by Nicole Allen, North Chesterfield VA



Judges' Choice Runner Up — *Log Cabin* by Emilie Schulte, Liberty IL



Judges' Choice Runner Up — *Dobby's Sweet Freedom* by Jessica Bishoff, Chesapeake VA

Our **4th Annual Gingerbread House Contest** was a huge hit! Who knew that when we decided to go virtual, we would garner nationwide interest? We were thrilled to have 29 amazing entries from 12 states ranging from coast to coast. Special thanks to Contest Chair **Kathy Morrison** and **Rita DeSanno**, our talented gingerbread class instructor.

In addition to the winners pictured above, the following received Honorable Mentions for their delightful creations. From New Bern: Carol More, Caitlin & Jennifer Magee, Dawn Freeman, and Mayte Rueda; Beverly Cutler, Springfield IL; Hope & Will Lonsford, Shelby Drenkel & Ian Bartlett, Lake Tapp WA; Jackie Miles, Chicago IL; Tina Keele, Manchester TN; Noel Hubbard, Torrence CA and Katie Kortright & Mari Brodhead, Kerhonkson NY.



Update from Mickey Miller, Executive Director

New Year? Yes, please!

We're all looking forward to a fresh new start in 2021! We are excited about two new family-friendly outdoor programs that are in the works:

Mark your calendars for the first **Hallowed Ground Lantern Tour** at our New Bern Battlefield Park on the evenings of April 9 & 10. Costumed reenactors will take you on an intimate walking tour by lantern light along the battlefield trails, where you'll hear some intriguing untold stories from Civil War-era figures.

Our inaugural **History Treasure Hunt** is scheduled for the June 5 weekend. Expect a fun driving tour with challenging clues and riddles leading to historical treasures throughout the greater New Bern area. Ideal for families or several couples. You'll be surprised at how much fascinating history is hidden in plain sight out there!

ABC Sale Update — For the past 30 years our **Attic, Basement, Closet Sale** has been a reliable fundraiser which has become well-known for estate items, antiques and quality furniture. Without the option of a full indoor sale for the foreseeable future, we'll instead have one or more outdoor curated mini-sales of our nicer antiques, furniture and collectibles. To keep storage costs down, and until we know what the future brings, we will only be accepting donated items in that category. Please call the office if you have any questions and check our website/Facebook for more.

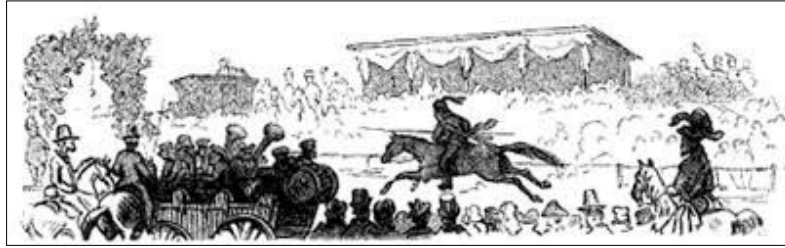


Did you know?...by Claudia Houston, Historian

A New Bern New Year's Tradition

The people of New Bern, even after the turmoil of the Civil War, found a way to begin the year with a unique celebration. On January 1, 1867, a tournament known as a "Ring" took place at a railed-in racetrack set up on the banks of the Neuse River. Unbelievably, it was covered with several inches of snow. That did not deter the nearly three thousand spectators and guests, who with a band, marched from the Gaston Hotel to the racetrack. Stands were erected for judges and participants, and wagons were provided for spectators.

Colonel John D. Whitford was the Chief Marshall and Ex-Governor Zebulon Vance, the speaker of the day. The Knights who were to compete that day



represented New Bern, Wilson, and Kinston. They were dressed in fancy uniforms and had names such as the Knight of the Rolling Neuse and Knight of Craven.

Five courses were run which took most of the day. The Knight of New Bern, who won the tournament, was Joseph M. Smith of the police department. In the evening, two hundred people attended a coronation at the Masonic building. Joseph Smith chose Miss Carrie McLaclan of New Bern as the Queen of Love and Beauty, and Zebulon Vance presented the trophy and crown.

This event was wildly popular for a time, but by 1876 the townspeople were more interested in who was chosen as the Queen of Love rather than who won the competition! New Bern moved on to other events and ways to celebrate.



Curator's Corner...by Jim Hodges

The Gaston Treasures

Over the past couple of years I have been methodically scanning and photographing all the artifacts in the Historical Society's collection. Considering that the total is over six thousand items, it's understandable that this project requires time and patience. Especially true when I pick up an artifact that is unique, and most are, I find myself reading or dwelling on its history.

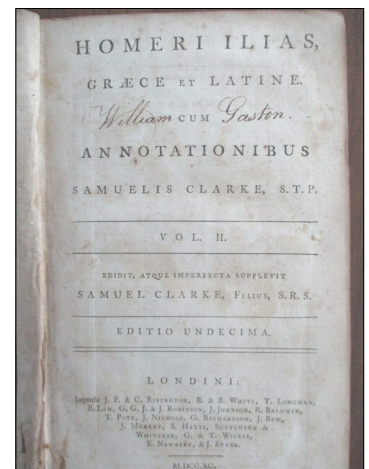
In the Attmore-Oliver House meeting room that also houses our library is a glass-doored book case that contains some extraordinary books. This collection of thirty-one books belongs to the New Bern Garden Club and has been on extended loan to the Historical Society since 1997. The books had been stored in the Gaston law office on Craven Street and were transferred to the Attmore-Oliver House where they would be kept in a more appropriate climate-controlled environment.

Amazingly these books were owned and studied by Judge William Gaston. After inspecting each book and photographing the title page, I could not help but reflect that William Gaston (1778-1844) held these very books in his hands. A highly revered son



of New Bern and North Carolina, Gaston was a respected lawyer, legislator, congressman, and jurist. An active Roman Catholic, he championed religious rights and civil rights. To think that these books helped shape the man and character of William Gaston is truly humbling.

The fragile condition of these books is understandable considering that they are all over two hundred years old, with the oldest published in 1691. The book covers a variety of legal topics. A 1790 copy of Homer's Iliad is in the collection and is presented in Greek and Latin—no English. Most of the books are signed by William Gaston and have a personal label affixed to the inside of the front cover, containing his name, New Bern, NC, and "Sapere aude". This Latin phrase meaning "dare to know" was originally used by the Roman poet Horace and suggests the "value of human endeavors, of persistence in reaching a goal, and of the need for effort in overcoming obstacles". Judge William Gaston certainly took this to heart.



Coming soon! *New Bern Voices in the Cause of Freedom*, a virtual program presented by Nelson McDaniel. Hear the stories of those who have made remarkable contributions to the cause of freedom in the past 300 years.



Historical Society President's Message...by Joe Hunt

The Society's Annual Fund campaign kicked off several weeks ago and your response to date has been gratifying. Thank you! Your generosity as members and volunteers is so important in helping us maintain our historic properties and develop new programs. If you are still considering a donation, it's not too late. **Any gift of any size** truly makes a difference!

We are reshaping the way we share the amazing stories of our community. Ghostwalk, our major fundraiser, was

modified for the virus and was well received but the number of tickets sold was far lower to control the size of the crowd.

In addition, new programs and activities are being planned and changes to existing events, such as our ABC Sale and Spring Heritage Homes Tour are being discussed.

Thank you for your loyal support. We look forward to 2021 and hope that after a few months, the new vaccines will allow all of us to lead a more normal life as we continue to evaluate the things we've learned in the past year.



Battlefield Park News...by Jon Miller, Battlefield Adjutant

A Bridge Too Far

Happy New Year, everyone! We've had a great year at the battlefield, ironically and partly because of the Corona virus. As restrictions tightened on gatherings, more and more people sought relief in things they could do to break the boredom of feeling confined to their homes. We had large numbers of visitors in 2020 and a record number of guided tours. And these visitors have gone out and told their friends what a great park it is. I guess you look for silver linings wherever you can find them.

Since our Fall update, we've seen Eagle Scout candidate Jonathan Swimmer from Troop 13 complete his project, the extension of the footbridge across the stream in front of Redan 1. This will allow visitors to move dryly along the path paralleling the railroad and go up to the newly acquired property. Congratulations and thank you to Jonathan and his team, pictured below!



Our own volunteers, **Gene Lock, Bill Long, Clare Gramley, John Wright, Rod Rhodes** and **Don Ingraham** have been hard at work repairing the old long bridge, the extension of which had been cobbled together over several renovations. This provided an opportunity to properly redesign the underlying support structures and although it is time consuming, it is being done in a way that will strengthen it and hopefully extend its service. A big thanks to all of them for their hard work in the mud and cold!



By the time you read this, we should have released the final version of the new Battlefield Audio Tour App, made possible by the generosity of **Jon Segal**. I'd like to thank the Board of Directors and our battlefield guides, past and present, who reviewed the app and provided feedback. **Katie Shorter** has done a superb job of pulling this project together and has produced a wonderful product that will no doubt be enjoyed by people around the country. Look for it on your smartphone app store...it's free!

The Harriett Marks Scholarship

Applications are now being accepted!

This scholarship is awarded to a **senior graduating from New Bern High School** and is based on academics and financial need. Completed applications (available on New Bern High School and Historical Society websites) must be returned to the New Bern Historical Society by **Friday, March 26, 2021**. Check our Facebook page for updates.

Save the Date

Tee It Up Fore History!

**Annual Golf Tournament
at Taberna Country Club**

May 8, 2021

Watch our website for registration and sponsorship opportunities!





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The Historical Society is proud of the relationships we have developed over the years with the local business community and thank them for their continued sponsorship of our events. Please recognize and support our business partners who generously contribute to the New Bern Historical Society.



Leave *YOUR* Legacy in New Bern through Planned Giving

If you believe history education is important, a planned gift is one way to play a role in preserving the past for the future. You can help make sure our historical materials and treasures, our properties, and our education programs continue to inspire our community and visitors of all ages for many years to come.

The Founders' Circle recognizes individuals who include the New Bern Historical Society in their financial and estate plans. By including a bequest in your plan your generosity can make a difference for years to come. To learn more about planning options or to notify us if you have already included us in your plans, please call Mickey Miller at 252-638-8558.



New Bern Historical Society Board of Directors

2020-2021 Officers & Appointed Positions

Joe Hunt, President
Kathy Morrison, First Vice-President
Egon Lippert, Second Vice-President
Chris Kelso, Secretary
Jim Morrison, Treasurer
Jon Miller, Battlefield Adjutant
Claudia Houston, Historian
Jim Hodges, Curator

2020-2021 Directors

Joe Anderson	Ken McCotter
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Clayton Cheek	Susan Moffat-Thomas
Susan Cook	Cathy O'Brien
Breck Gibbs	Gerri Olvaney
Lynne Harakal	Walt Teasdale
Cheryl Lawrence	Patti Urick

Administrative Staff

Mickey Miller—Executive Director
Karen Bixler—Assistant to Director
Sue Dunn—Admin. Assistant