

Journal of the New Bern Historical Society

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JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY is a quarterly publication of the New Bern Historical Society Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of the rich heritage of New Bern. Articles, letters, photographs, and memorabilia relevant to the history of New Bern and Craven County may be submitted to the editor for review. (Post Office Box 119, New Bern, North Carolina 28560)

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

1988 marks a milestone for the Historical Society with the publication of a new journal, the JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Recognized as a need over three years ago, the Newsletter Committee began planning for a journal which would feature in-depth, researched articles about New Bern's rich history, while continuing the publication of the Newsletter which provides members with timely information about the organization's events, and other pertinent information.

The Newsletter has recently been reorganized and is being published monthly by the Executive Director. Our newest publication, the JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, will be published two times in 1988, with a goal of quarterly publication by 1990. Edited by Vance Harper Jones, with assistance from a number of talented members and guest writers, the JOURNAL will provide a forum for historical articles on important people, places, organizations, and events in New Bern and Craven County.

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society feels that the JOURNAL is a much needed publication, one which will provide enjoyable reading for members of the organization while serving as an educational tool for local historians, students, and others. It is with much pleasure that we introduce the JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY during the year in which our organization, one of the oldest local historical societies in North Carolina, celebrates its sixty-fifth anniversary.

E. Newsom Williams, Ph. D.
President

ATTMORE-OLIVER HOUSE

The Society Celebrates 35 Years of Ownership

Jim Gunn

In 1953 the New Bern Historical Society was fortunate in being able to acquire one of the most distinguished residences in the city, the Attmore-Oliver House, neglected and in need of major restoration at the time of purchase. The past 35 years have seen constant care and attention devoted to restoration and refurbishing. Assisted by grants from foundations, generous gifts and painstaking labor from members, today the restored house stands proudly on Broad Street as it has for nearly 200 years, a fine example of the early architecture of New Bern. The impressive exterior is enhanced by graceful interior furnishings and decor, complemented by appropriate displays of local memorabilia. As headquarters of the Society the house is the focal point for a wide range of year-round activities. Few historical groups anywhere are privileged to enjoy the continuous use of a 200-year-old authentic landmark. The New Bern Historical Society owes grateful thanks to those far-sighted members who, with great courage, committed the Society to an outlay of \$30,000 three and a half decades ago.

The exterior, as viewed from Broad Street, is immediately impressive. The style is usually described as Federal Central Hall Plan, but the four massive chimneys dominating the structure, a rarity in New Bern architecture, give an added



RECENT BROAD STREET VIEW OF ATTMORE-OLIVER HOUSE. NBHS file photo.

strength and dimension. Certainly the roots of the design are Georgian or Adam in form. The third story dormers, another unique feature, appear to derive from French classical style. The flat-roofed colonaded portico is Greek Revival. Despite the apparent mix of architectural styles there is a symmetry and proportion that is distinguished and pleasing to the eye. From the rear, the approach usually seen by visitors, the appearance is completely different. Dominated by full width porches on the first and second floors, the look is "southern" and reminiscent of many fine nineteenth century residences. The exterior as seen today resembles, if not duplicates, that of 1834, when the house was enlarged to its present size.

The original building, a story and a half structure, stood on the site from around 1790, when the population of New Bern numbered "about 2000 souls". Built by Samuel Chapman soon after he purchased Lot 102, the modest home served him and his family until his death in 1806. As a Lieutenant in the Revolutionary War, Chapman became a friend of George Washington, and retained the connection after moving to New Bern on conclusion of his service. A successful merchant, businessman, and owner of lands in the area, he also acted as Clerk of the Superior Court of Craven County, an appointment granted in 1788. A man with a successful business career and a responsible civic office would naturally wish to convey an appearance of substance and respectability, and a home, however modest, located on a principal street in New Bern would serve the purpose well. Active in community life during Washington's "Southern Tour" in 1791, Samuel Chapman "waited upon" the President, representing St. John's Masonic Lodge.

Chapman's will, read in 1807, listed an extensive inventory of household furnishings,

and 21 slaves working on his plantation outside New Bern. An entry of "about 25 Gallons of Brandy" hints at the lifestyle of the times. On the death of Chapman's widow Katherine, the daughter Caroline and her husband Henry P. Waring owned the house, and in 1834 they sold to Isaac Taylor, a prominent businessman and banker. On the marriage of his daughter Mary to George Sitgreaves Attmore, Taylor generously gave the home to the couple, but retained the title himself. Enlargement of the structure to a three story center hall plan is believed to have begun the same year. The Sitgreaves family, George's mother's people, were well-known New Bernians, while the Attmores had Philadelphia roots and were prominent citizens there. A priceless portrait of George Attmore, Sr., hangs in the parlor today.

In 1860 the property passed into the hands of Hannah Taylor Attmore Oliver and her husband William Hollister Oliver. In 1880 Mrs. Oliver's surviving daughters and a son received the property through her will. Mary Taylor Oliver lived in the house until her death in 1951. "Miss Mary", as she was fondly known to most New Bernians, is reputed to have taken the daring step of smoking a cigarette in public at the corner of New and Middle Streets, imparting a great shock to the community.

Left by Miss Mary's will to five nephews, the Huske family of Fayetteville, the house was purchased from them by the Historical Society in 1953 after some negotiation. Extensive restoration work, necessitated by 150 years of continuous occupation, began almost immediately. The NEW BERN MIRROR of June 23, 1961, gave a concise account of the renovation efforts.

"UGLY AND FORLORN", began the caption below the 1953 photo, "Broken windows and a dingy exterior gave the neglected Attmore-Oliver House a haunted look Interested in preserving its past, the New Bern Historical Society

visualized better things for the old residence, and purchased it for \$30,000. Assuming such an obligation was a bold move for the 40 members, who were aware that the Society had little more than \$200 in its treasury." Faith and vision paid off.



Attmore-Oliver House, 1953. Photo by Billy Benners.

A second picture, taken in 1961, showed the house much as it is today, with the caption, "RESTORED TO BEAUTY--Because somebody cared--in this instance the New Bern Historical Society--the Attmore-Oliver House got a new lease on life. So did the Society. It now has 250 names on roll, and property assets at the end of 1960 of \$53,823.12."

Over the past quarter century restorations and additions have been carried out almost continuously. In the 1953 photo a metal roof is

evident, and this has been replaced by authentic cedar shakes. A brickwork-supported picket fence now surrounds the front garden, separating it from a widened Broad Street.

The value of the Attmore-Oliver House to the Society and to the community at large cannot be stated in terms of money alone. As a center of activities and public tours it is an outstanding place in the life of present-day New Bern. Business conferences, committee meetings, social gatherings, and wedding receptions are but a few of the events held in an atmosphere filled with the grace and charm of a bygone era. The foresight and dedication of 40 Society members with a stake of only \$200 in hand, has been fully justified in 35 years of community use.

"WHEN SORROWS COME"—A TUSCARORA SAGA

Audrey Mellevoid

When Columbus thought he had found India, he called the people "Indios" which, translated from Spanish, meant Indians. The so-called "New World" Columbus discovered was not new to the nations dwelling herein, for they had discovered the Americas thousands of years before.

There is no way of knowing just how many Indians lived in North Carolina before the arrival of the white man. But history tells us that when Giovanni da Verrazano sailed along the coast of Carolina in 1524 under the French flag, he "saw everywhere very great fires by reason of the multitude of the inhabitants". Ralph Lane, who explored for Sir Walter Raleigh, wrote "the continent is of a huge and unknown greatness and very well peopled and towned".

The American Indian was not just a single breed whose ancestors emigrated en masse from Asia. They came from widely different sources in the Old World, often centuries apart. There are recorded tribes with varying skin colors ranging from almost black to ashen, olive, terra cotta, blonde and brown. Some have an Oriental appearance, while the Algonquins are without doubt Semites, according to Elizabeth L. Coombs.

When our European forebears landed in North Carolina, they came in contact with Indians who spoke several totally different languages. These Indians belonged to numerous heterogeneous tribes and villages. They were, in fact, not unlike the separate nations of Europe. The languages of the native Carolinians were divided into three families--Algonquian, Siouan, and

Iroquoian. The speakers of the Algonquian language dwelt primarily along the coast, north of the Cape Fear region. Those who spoke Siouan lived in the Cape Fear region and the piedmont. The nations speaking Iroquoian lived in between also on the coastal plain and in the western mountains. Within those families many different languages were spoken by people who very often did not understand each other. For example, those speaking only Iroquoian Cherokee were not able to converse with or understand the Iroquoian Tuscarora.

The history of the American Indian is tragically prejudiced, based erroneously upon information of "ethnocentric Europeans"--people who were biased in their own ways of thinking and doing things.

The word Tuscarora means "hemp gatherers". The tribe was regarded by some as "kind, peaceable, ingenious and industrious"--until they were hastily degraded by the colonists who wantonly and willfully confiscated their lands. Just as the Puritans of New England failed to recognize the Indians' rights to their land, so too the colonists of North Carolina usurped the lands of the Tuscarora without any thought of purchase. It was not surprising that the unjust conduct of the colonists finally provoked the Tuscarora and awakened in the minds of those erstwhile amiable people jealousy and distrust that ultimately ripened into a hatred which led to reprisal and resistance.

John Lawson in his diary, speaking of the Tuscarora said, "They were really better to us than we have been to them; they always freely give us of their victuals and take care we are armed against hunger and thirst; we trade with them and daily cheat them in everything we sell, and esteem it a gift of Christianity not to sell to them so cheap as we do to the Christians, as we call ourselves". Not long after, John Lawson was put to death by that very tribe; but then

Mr. Lawson wasn't always honorable to them either.

It was not only confiscation of their lands or the manner in which they had been cheated that were the prime causes for concern on the part of the Tuscarora. For sixty years prior to the so-called Tuscarora War (1711-1713) their young had been kidnapped and sold into slavery in the northern colonies. This was the true cause of the Tuscarora War, and overlooked by most historians. In 1710, more than a year before the famous massacre, the Tuscarora petitioned the Provincial Government of Pennsylvania to come to their aid. (By now the Indians of Pennsylvania were concerned at the kidnapping of their brethren.) On June 8, 1710, the governor and Provincial Council sent two commissioners to meet the Tuscarora emissaries who were found in the presence of four Conestoga chiefs and Opessa, the chief of the Shawnee. Their petition is a poignant one, metaphorically as well as diplomatically. Basically they sought refuge in the Philadelphia Colony, begging for a "cessation from murdering and taking them so that thereafter they would not fear a mouse, or anything that ruffles the leaves". At this time there had been no hostility on the part of the Tuscarora. They wanted to maintain peace, but above all they wanted a cessation of the kidnapping and selling into slavery of their people. To that end they were willing to forsake the only home they had ever known. Without a certificate from the government they wished to leave, the Pennsylvanians would not help them, fearing they might fall out of favor with the English. However, their pitiful messages had been heard by members of the Five Nations in Canada who would later take steps to aid the long suffering Tuscaroras.

It had been a custom with the Tuscaroras to visit the north every five to eight years. They

would travel in small groups, proving they were not a threat to anyone, carrying treasures not available in Canada--wampum shells. Several thousand of them would travel as soon as spring arrived, and they walked all the way to the "land of the Five Nations" where they would feast together and exchange gifts. When winter was about to arrive, they would trek home to harvest crops which had been planted before they left. Those crops had been cared for by the elderly or those not strong enough to travel the distance to Canada.

It was about this time that Baron de Graffenried, a Swiss nobleman, was looking for land for his people who had left Switzerland and were arriving in the port of Philadelphia. History records that de Graffenried was approached "by a rascally Englishman who said he had just the land the Baron might like". He further added the land "had once belonged to some Indians, but they had left North Carolina and had moved far to the north". What de Graffenried saw was Chattawka, "the point of land between the Neuse and Trent Rivers that subsequently became the sight of New Bern". De Graffenried complained that the Surveyor General, John Lawson, was "dishonest for having charged him a heavy price for it, and for the consequences of his not knowing that Lawson had no title to the land and that the place was still inhabited by Indians although the Surveyor General had attested the land was free of encumbrances and unoccupied".

Lawson had to have known the thousand and more Tuscarora would soon return from the north. He conspired with other Indians (probably Cherokee and Catawba) to take the few Tuscarora who had remained at home and sell them into slavery in the West Indies. When the tribe arrived from the north and found what had happened, they did the only thing they could. When the fighting ceased, approximately seventy

innocent Swiss were dead. Both Lawson and de Graffenried were carried off by the Tuscarora and questioned by them. The Baron was released, but the "rascally Englishman was tortured to death".

The New Bern massacre was an unavoidably dreadful tragedy. Some say there was conspiracy on the part of other Indian tribes to destroy the Tuscaroras. History records that "Colonel Barnwell and his Indian allies and troops came up from South Carolina and taught the Tuscarora a lesson". The tribe had been estimated to number between 1200 and 6000. When Barnwell's attack ended, 900 Tuscarora were dead, others were maimed, and many were sold into slavery.

When it was all over, the Tuscarora knew their way of life was ended. In 1713 they petitioned the Five Nations to permit the survivors to become the Sixth Nation. A few at a time, over the next 90 years, emigrated--some to the Susquehanna area, others to the Ramapo Mountains of New Jersey where their descendants are a distinctly ethnic group, no longer existing as Indians; still others settled in Niagara. Today the Sixth Nation, the Tuscarora of Canada and New York State, is still in existence.

Nearly 80 years after the Tuscarora War, Red Jacket, chief of the Seneca Indians, an eloquent orator rather than a fighter, who had spent his lifetime trying to preserve the Indians' rights, said, "We stand a small Island in the bosom of the great waters... They rise, they press upon us and the waves will settle over us and we shall disappear forever. Who then lives to mourn us, White Man? None."

BELLAIR PLANTATION--NEW BERN'S "TARA"

Tom Thompson

The powerful and nostalgic emotions which were evoked by GONE WITH THE WIND are probably best documented by the fact that the movie is still the all-time top box office show. While many first-time visitors to the South expect to find a "Tara" on every corner, the sad fact, at least from an architectural and historic standpoint, is that very few remain standing today. There are only a handful in eastern North Carolina, so it is particularly noteworthy that we have an excellent example of a plantation house right here in Craven County.

Bellair, as it has been known since Revolutionary times, is the only plantation-style structure left in Craven County, and because it is a private residence, it is still somewhat obscure, at least in the public's mind, when compared to Hope Plantation in Windsor or Orton Plantation in Wilmington, to use two better-known examples.

Located on Washington Post Road a few miles west of present-day New Bern, the structure itself was begun in 1760 by the Spaight family. It was finished, however, by Wilson Blount in about 1780. This has led to some misperception on the part of several authors who claim it was built in 1780, although the letter accompanying this article clearly shows that it was in use in 1776. It was acquired by the Richardson family in 1838 and is currently occupied by Graham Richardson, so it truly can be said that it is an ancestral home. Andrew Richardson, who married Elizabeth McKay, originally came from



BELLAIR PLANTATION HOUSE TODAY RISES MAJESTICALLY ABOVE CORNFIELDS OUTSIDE NEW BERN. Photo by Tom Thompson.

Pennsylvania and it was his son John who acquired the house in the nineteenth century.

The relative lack of plantation homes in North Carolina is generally blamed on the combined efforts of General Ambrose Burnside, our resident Union general, and General George T. Sherman, who swept through North Carolina on his way to Georgia. The fact that this particular edifice escaped the wrath of the conquering Northern forces is noteworthy in itself. The document responsible is still in the house and takes the form of a safeguard granted to John Richardson by Ambrose Burnside on March 20, 1862. There is no mention within the document or within the literature researched explaining why the safeguard was granted, but it states in no uncertain terms that the property, the family of John Richardson, and the plantation itself were to be secure from any transgressions on the part of the Northern forces.

The building itself has a hipped roof, is constructed of brick, "7 bays long" and much of the craftsmanship inside is similar to that found in the Stanly House, suggesting that the same craftsmen were responsible for the construction. The following letter was written to one Elizabeth Murphrey, who resided in Dobbs, North Carolina, near Snow Hill, by her daughter-in-law, Mary Murphrey, who was the wife of John Murphrey, Jr. John Murphrey, Sr., was the GR-GR-GR-GR-GR-grandfather of County Attorney Jim Sugg. The letter, written from Bellair Plantation, was perhaps mundane as far as the writer was concerned, but many of the disclosures make compelling reading to a stranger from the twentieth century. Death from fever (probably yellow fever) was a way of life in eighteenth century New Bern, and this letter brings that home forcefully to us once again. There are also some interesting comments regarding the "frictions" of married life, the

death of young children, and the impact that the Revolutionary War would have on the economy.

I am indebted to Jim Sugg and "Miss Natalie" Sugg for their help in providing a copy of the letter below as well as being extremely helpful to the research.

Belare near Newbern
19 Octr. 1776

Dear Madam

I am greatly saddened by the news of the fever on Contentny. William brot the news when he came to this place with his family. Johnnie was so much affected by the death of his dear Sister Gail as to be unable to eat or sleep for near a forte night. Both his health & his business have suffered from this condition. She above all others in this world was his true soul mate & confidant. He prays greatly that Lanie and Jethra recovered & were not taken also. I am quite well tho fat with child yet. John has removed me to this place for fear of the outbreak of fever in the town and to escape the Heats there which are greater than any I can remember for this season of the Year. The countrie round bouts is very pleasant & healthie and the house elegant and new. Mr. Blount is quite nice and much the tease and his Lady indeed an ornament to his house. Taken separately they are accomplished and enjoyable company but the friction that exist between them as man and wife can make them quite uncomfortable to be with at times. They were kind enough to prepare for me a room below stairs. I am so plumb now that I can hardly rise from my chair let alone try to walk stairs. But it is only a small inconvenience when one thinks of the great pleasure god grants us by

children. And yet, when thinking on Gail it is hard to understand why god should grant us such a gift only to take it so shortly from us. Everyone about town is up for freedom. John is still of two minds. This independancy is sweet indeed but he fears war will destroy our trade or atleast cripple it to the extent of economic ruin for the Province. I can but wonder what condition the world will be in when my child enters it. Johnnie has spoken of sending to the Northward for a stone marker for Gail and swears he will do so if matters do not worsen. Madame, I pray god to protect you & your family & deliver them from future pain and sickness.

My wishes and prayers to all.

Your Loving daughter,

Mary

Mrs. Elizabeth Murphrey
the Beare Garden
Dobbs, N. C.

CELEBRATING NEW BERN IN PAGEANTRY AND PARADES

Mary Osborne Conover

Give New Bernians reason to celebrate and we'll do it in style!

In the 1850's, we danced in the streets to welcome the extension of the railroad from Raleigh.

At the turn of the century, we celebrated New Bern's agricultural and industrial preeminence with a series of spectaculars at fairgrounds on George Street. In February 1897, for example, we whooped it up at a Fish, Oyster & Game Fair.

Timber undoubtedly was the major contributor to the prosperity of the community at the time. But lumber was only one of several industries lending stability through financial support. Commercial fishing and truck farming did, too, spurred by the rail service that made New Bern a major port for shipping seafood and produce to markets up north.

But we digress. Our subject is parades and celebrations, and the most important were yet to come--linked not to the city's present at the time each occurred, but to the historic past of a town known in its early days as "The Athens of North Carolina".

Recalling that New Bern was founded in 1710, in 1910 you'd expect a 200th birthday salute. Indeed, from July 25 to 30 of that year, there was a rouser--complete with a Great Historical Pageant on Land and Water, Beautiful Floral and Industrial Parades, a Grand Display of Fireworks on the Water, an Exhibition of Historic Relics, and more: Firemen's Tournament

Contests and Races.

That New Bern's Bi-Centennial Celebration and the State Firemen's Association 23rd Annual Convention coincided is consistent with one among many of our turn-of-century claims to fame. In pumper contests and for hose laying, our stalwart firefighters set numerous world records!

Why 1910 was a year of parades and pumper contests, one wonders not. Why the next such event occurred in 1929, however, does raise a question: Of what significance is a 219th birthday?

Answer: It was the tenor of the times, not the date, that prompted so impressive a party.

As John B. Green, III, points out in A NEW BERN ALBUM, New Bern was growing. The war in Europe had been satisfactorily concluded and business was booming. The local Chamber of Commerce was touting the area as "The Land of Enchanting Waters" and "The New Newport of the South" where outstanding yachting, fishing, and hunting were available the year around. New Bern was promoted as the ideal place to live, work, and invest.

"Perhaps with a realization that something valuable was being left behind," Green observes, "New Bernians began to develop a renewed interest in their past. The New Bern Historical Society was formed, and in June 1929 an elaborate pageant was held which celebrated the long history of the town." Its glory, fortunately, was undiminished by an event of later date: the great stock market crash.

THOUSANDS TO SEE NEW BERN PAGEANT

Will Commemorate Important Events

In History of Town and State

GOVERNOR GARDNER TO BE HONOR GUEST

Swiss Minister and Members of Congressional
Committee Will Also Attend: Many of Residents
Will Wear Colonial Costumes for Occasion

Thus did THE NEW BERNIAN headline a lead story anticipating the historical celebration and pageant.

Thousands were expected to attend, and thousands did, including (as forecast) Governor O. Max Gardner and Mrs. Gardner, the Swiss Minister, members of Congress and of state legislative committees. Descendants of Baron Christopher de Graffenried gathered from throughout the world for a first reunion.

On Tuesday, June 11, the governor was greeted by a cannon salute, opening the public program at 10:30 a. m. Driven through the streets in an antique carriage, he was welcomed at the John Wright Stanly home by Mayor-Elect Hubert Tolson, dressed to represent Mayor Joseph Leech as he welcomed President Washington to New Bern in 1791. Pathe, Fox, and M-G-M all made talking moving pictures of the scene, during which New Bernians had been cautioned in advance by THE NEW BERNIAN that "absolute quiet must be maintained".

At 11:00 a. m. a parade began to move from George and Pollock Streets through the business and riverfront residential section. Vying for a total of \$200 in prize monies, floats--all non-commercial--made the parade a pageant in itself, portraying such historical subjects as the trial of Lawson and de Graffenried by the Tuscarora Indians, the removal of cannon from Tryon Palace, the Edenton tea party, and the first printing press.

In the line of march were marshals on horseback, Cherokee Indians, the Sudan patrol, the American Legion drum corps, the Fort Bragg band, Boy Scouts, city officials, fire

department equipment, covered wagons, springless wagons, ox carts, Tommy Tucker and his Atlantic Beach orchestra (to play that evening at a colonial ball), and the crews of the Coast Guard cutters Apache and Pamlico--the latter "in gala attire" joining patrol boats, yachts, decorated motor boats, and, at anchor offshore, the seaplane that delivered dignitaries from the nation's capital.

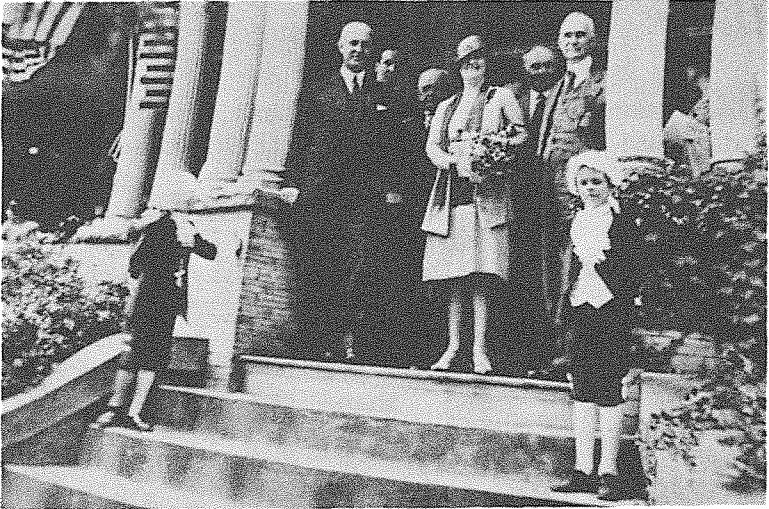
In short, history was being remade. "So far as is possible the colonial atmosphere of the town will be restored," promised THE NEW BERNIAN. "Numbers of residents will wear colonial costumes. Band members and police officers will wear colonial hats. Store windows will display colonial relics. The historical motif will predominate in the morning parade, open house, historical pageant and colonial ball."

Costumed town criers were stationed at main business corners "to make important announcements", and town clerks were stationed at New Bern's portals to invite guests to register in old-fashioned ledgers as a permanent file for the city. There were, in addition, Swiss souvenir vendors.

From 4:00 to 5:30 p. m., 14 colonial homes--each with an American flag and a soldier stationed outside--were open to visitors. Buffet suppers were scheduled at six; and at eight, "New Bern in Historical Review" commenced in Kafer Park.

Rhapsodically reported by THE NEW BERNIAN as "one of the most unique and effective productions of the kind ever given in the state", the pageant was witnessed by a crowd of 8000.

Written by Mrs. William Hilton and directed by Miss Olive Jackson of New York, it was under the general chairmanship of Mrs. Richard Nixon Duffy, president of the Historical Society, with Miss Gertrude Carraway her assistant.



Gov. and Mrs. O. Max Gardner celebrate with New Bernians in 1929. Photo from Smallwood Scrapbook courtesy of John Green.

"Elaborately and artistically presented" by a cast of a thousand, it recalled events of local, state, and national importance, mainly from about 1770 to 1791.

"Rarely are such talent and beauty so well combined with historical accuracy as were noticeable last night," raved THE NEW BERNIAN. Beginning with a prologue showing the amalgamation of the nationalities in the settlement of New Bern, the pageant continued through a ball at Tryon Palace, the first Provincial Congress in 1774, and the meeting of the committee on safety in 1775, with the subsequent ousting of Royal Governor Josiah Martin from the town.

A fourth episode depicting the first State Assembly at New Bern in April 1777 was followed by the visit of Washington, reproducing his welcome and a banquet in his honor at Tryon Palace. A brief "processional" of the years 1800-1918 ensued.

The pageant's entire cast appeared in the

final scene, symbolizing the past, present, and future of New Bern. The spirit of the cypress tree was superseded by the spirit of America, flanked by the spirit of North Carolina and the spirit of New Bern. The great forces of Religion, Education, Labor, Industry, Art, and other great factors were all represented.

It was a glorious occasion, indeed, this celebration in the year 1929. Though reported to be less grand than the Bi-Centennial Celebration of 1910, and possibly less ambitious than the celebration of New Bern's 250th birthday in 1960, its place in the annals of the city is special: It was the first contributor to the restoration of Tryon Palace.

Long interested in such a possibility, Mrs. William N. Reynolds of Winston-Salem agreed in 1929 to underwrite the cost of producing that year's pageant with the stipulation that any surplus monies would be returned to her. The \$3500 she received was later returned to New Bern and kept in trust until the restoration of the palace became a reality in the late 1950's.

Now THAT was a celebration, the official opening of Tryon Palace to the public on April 8, 1959! But that is another story.

HISTORICAL PROFILE: JAMES DAVIS

Charlotte and Jack Breytspraak

We wondered, as we set about selecting a subject for this inaugural issue, where should one begin. As this is a publishing venture it struck us that it would be appropriate and, hopefully, interesting to identify and write about an early printer or publisher. But, could such a person's existence be clearly documented. And, if so, were there interesting, illuminative illustrations of his character; specific activities that would flesh out that character and bring the reader into contact with a person as differentiated from a mere chronicling of historical facts. It turned out that there was documentation as well as background information in abundance. James Davis (1721-1785) was an interesting, interested, complex person as well as the first printer in New Bern.

James Davis was born in Virginia on October 21, 1721. There is no information available on his early life but by 1749 he was living in Williamsburg. On April 14 of that year he was appointed to the post of Public Printer by the North Carolina General Assembly held in New Bern. He set up shop on Pollock Street in June, later moving to Broad Street. His primary responsibility was to publish official documents of the Assembly including the laws. He was also responsible for printing currency. In his first year he produced North Carolina's first imprint, *THE JOURNAL OF THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES*.

Beyond this official work, Davis also became involved in other printing ventures. He printed books and pamphlets but most importantly, he

started North Carolina's first newspaper, the **NORTH CAROLINA GAZETTE**, in July 1751. This was a risky venture. There was little commerce, thus, there was little need for advertising. The population was primarily rural, disinterested, and often illiterate. There was no regular post, making distribution a problem. Nonetheless he kept the paper going, on and off, and under various names, until his death in 1785. Usually in a four-page format and issued weekly, it covered primarily outside news and included feature stories ranging from romance tales to the expanded obituary of a 112-year-old woman in Derbyshire, England, who had perished after a tree limb from which she had plucked a fruit fell and broke her arm.

Davis had a contentious personality which put him at odds with many of his fellow New Bernians. His first noteworthy "set-to" was with no less a personage than Arthur Dobbs, the Colonial Governor, who in 1764 refused to reappoint Davis public printer "upon account of negligence". This was not the first time that Davis had been charged with less than optimum performance; in 1752 the Speaker of the House charged him with "omissions and neglects in sending the newly printed laws to the Counties, as was his duty". Davis had countered this charge by insisting that he had indeed sent the laws but not by special messenger as his salary, only about half what other colonial printers received, could not justify such expense. The situation in 1764 was more significant in that it embroiled Davis in a political dispute between the Colonial Assembly and the Royal Governor. As a result of Dobbs's refusal to reappoint him, a committee of the Assembly selected one Andrew Steuart of Philadelphia as a replacement. However, the bill of appointment was defeated whereupon Dobbs then appointed Steuart "his majestys printer". This outraged the Assembly which denounced the appointment as

"a violent stretch of power" and in turn appointed Davis Public Printer after providing a 100-pound stipend for Steuart for his trouble and expense.

Davis was a strong supporter of the revolution and he used his publications in behalf of that effort. However, this did not prevent him from displays of temper if the cause of the new government ran counter to his own interests. He objected bitterly to the anchoring of an armed ship in the Neuse River near a plantation he owned, claiming the crew were drunk and rowdy and that they were raiding his cornfields. This despite the fact that the ship had been fitted out by North Carolinians and that the crew had been characterized as merely "healthy men all anxious to adventure". He also became embroiled with a French officer in 1778 who had been granted the right to recruit a regiment from among French settlers in New Bern. One of those recruited was an apprentice of John Davis, James Davis's son, a ship captain. Davis, together with his son and some twenty seamen from the son's ship, marched to the regiment's quarters and abused and threatened the French officer. Insults were also hurled at prominent New Bernians who had failed to support him in this effort.

These defects of personality did not prevent Davis from an active public life. In 1753 he became a member of the county court. In 1754 he was elected sheriff of Craven County. He served in the Assembly from 1755 to 1760. In 1755 he was appointed Postmaster of New Bern by Benjamin Franklin and in 1768 he became justice of the peace in New Bern, an office he held until 1778. During the revolution he was a member of the Council of Safety in New Bern and climaxed his political career by becoming a member of the Council of State in 1781.

The James Davis House at 211 Broad Street is the only visible reminder of New Bern's first

printer. There is some question about the authenticity of the house itself largely because of a letter to the Earl of Hillsborough from Thomas Howe, collector of the port of New Bern. In this letter, which reported on a fierce storm that had struck the area, he said that "Mr Davis's house [is] a mere wreck". There is little question, however, that the lot was owned by Davis. Presumably the house is at least representative and thus can stand as a memorial to a colorful, multi-dimensional man who had a significant impact on New Bern and North Carolina.

SAINT PETER'S A. M. E. ZION CHURCH

Barbara W. Howlett

Saint Peter's A. M. E. Zion Church has its roots in New York City. In 1796, as a protest against discrimination, a group of freedmen left the white Methodist Episcopal Church to which they had belonged to start a church of their own. This group, under the leadership of James Varick, often met in the New York workshop of William Miller, and from this humble beginning the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was born.

In 1863 the A. M. E. Zion Church, which had flourished for many years in the north, turned its eyes south. At the New England Conference, Bishop J. J. Clinton appointed the Reverend James W. Hood as a missionary to North Carolina. On January 20, 1863, the Reverend Hood arrived in New Bern, North Carolina, where he found a well-established congregation connected with the Southern Methodist Church; it was called at this time St. Andrew's Chapel. The church unanimously voted to unite with the Zion connection and became the first A. M. E. Zion Church in the south, the Mother Church of southern Zion Methodism. On December 17, 1864, the North Carolina Conference was organized at this church with Bishop J. J. Clinton as its founding prelate. In 1879 the name was changed from St. Andrew's Chapel to St. Peter's A. M. E. Zion Church.

The frame building in which the congregation was worshipping had a handsome central tower visible the length of Queen Street. Although the cornerstone reads 1879, it appears on the



SAINT PETER'S A. M. E. ZION CHURCH STANDS RESTORED AND ENLARGED AFTER THE FIRE OF 1922. Photo by Jim Gunn.

Sanborn Insurance Maps for the first time in 1908. The structure was brick veneered in 1914 and renovated into an imposing Gothic-inspired edifice. Unfortunately it was devastated by the disastrous fire of December 1922. (Photographs of the ruins may be seen at the Firemen's Museum in New Bern.) In 1923 the Reverend H. L. Holt came as pastor and laid the present church's foundation over the basement of the former structure. Meanwhile the basement walls of the parish dining hall adjacent to the west were roofed over the served as a temporary meeting place. In 1925 the parsonage was built also on the west. For over 17 years this congregation struggled to rebuild what it had lost so swiftly in 1922. It was not until the tenure of the Reverend E. J. McIver in 1940 that the new church building was completed, and on Easter morning of that year the congregation paraded triumphantly into the new structure.

The church has thirty-foot ceilings, stained glass windows, and simple but elegant woodwork and pews which are lovingly cared for. After many years of use, age took its toll and repairs became imperative. Holes in the roof and ceiling allowed not only rain damage, but an occasional unauthorized winged visitor to services. With the help of a Kellenberger grant and much work by the parishioners and the current pastor the Reverend Granville Burnette, the plaster ceiling was replaced, painting, plastering, and other repairs were completed; and in October of 1986, after the sanctuary had been closed for repairs for several months, the triumphal march of 1940 was recreated and the renovated church was again opened to joyful worshippers.

The parishioners of St. Peter's A. M. E. Zion Church are justly proud of their church and its place in the history of New Bern as well as its importance in the history of A. M. E. Zionism. Their motto, appropriate to a

community steeped in history, is "We respect the past, consecrate the present, have faith in the future, and above all protect our heritage."

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

1988 marks a milestone for the Historical Society with the publication of a new journal, the JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Recognized as a need over three years ago, the Newsletter Committee began planning for a journal which would feature in-depth, researched articles about New Bern's rich history, while continuing the publication of the Newsletter which provides members with timely information about the organization's events, and other pertinent information.

The Newsletter has recently been reorganized and is being published monthly by the Executive Director. Our newest publication, the JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, will be published two times in 1988, with a goal of quarterly publication by 1990. Edited by Vance Harper Jones, with assistance from a number of talented members and guest writers, the JOURNAL will provide a forum for historical articles on important people, places, organizations, and events in New Bern and Craven County.

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society feels that the JOURNAL is a much needed publication, one which will provide enjoyable reading for members of the organization while serving as an educational tool for local historians, students, and others. It is with much pleasure that we introduce the JOURNAL OF THE NEW BERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY during the year in which our organization, one of the oldest local historical societies in North Carolina, celebrates its sixty-fifth anniversary.

E. Newsom Williams, Ph. D.
President

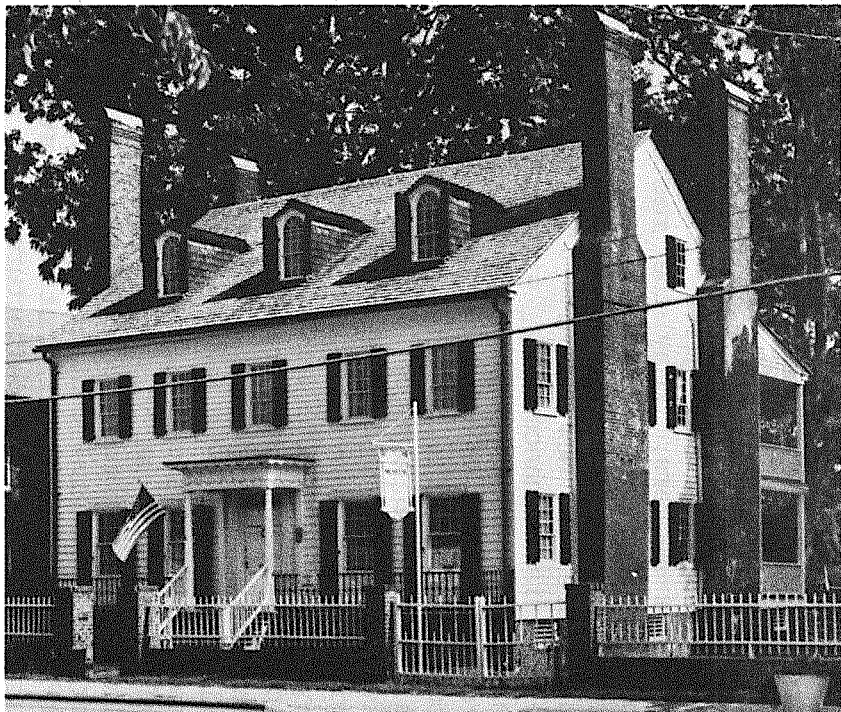
ATTMORE-OLIVER HOUSE

The Society Celebrates 35 Years of Ownership

Jim Gunn

In 1953 the New Bern Historical Society was fortunate in being able to acquire one of the most distinguished residences in the city, the Attmore-Oliver House, neglected and in need of major restoration at the time of purchase. The past 35 years have seen constant care and attention devoted to restoration and refurbishing. Assisted by grants from foundations, generous gifts and painstaking labor from members, today the restored house stands proudly on Broad Street as it has for nearly 200 years, a fine example of the early architecture of New Bern. The impressive exterior is enhanced by graceful interior furnishings and decor, complemented by appropriate displays of local memorabilia. As headquarters of the Society the house is the focal point for a wide range of year-round activities. Few historical groups anywhere are privileged to enjoy the continuous use of a 200-year-old authentic landmark. The New Bern Historical Society owes grateful thanks to those far-sighted members who, with great courage, committed the Society to an outlay of \$30,000 three and a half decades ago.

The exterior, as viewed from Broad Street, is immediately impressive. The style is usually described as Federal Central Hall Plan, but the four massive chimneys dominating the structure, a rarity in New Bern architecture, give an added



RECENT BROAD STREET VIEW OF ATTMORE-OLIVER HOUSE. NBHS file photo.

strength and dimension. Certainly the roots of the design are Georgian or Adam in form. The third story dormers, another unique feature, appear to derive from French classical style. The flat-roofed colonaded portico is Greek Revival. Despite the apparent mix of architectural styles there is a symmetry and proportion that is distinguished and pleasing to the eye. From the rear, the approach usually seen by visitors, the appearance is completely different. Dominated by full width porches on the first and second floors, the look is "southern" and reminiscent of many fine nineteenth century residences. The exterior as seen today resembles, if not duplicates, that of 1834, when the house was enlarged to its present size.

The original building, a story and a half structure, stood on the site from around 1790, when the population of New Bern numbered "about 2000 souls". Built by Samuel Chapman soon after he purchased Lot 102, the modest home served him and his family until his death in 1806. As a Lieutenant in the Revolutionary War, Chapman became a friend of George Washington, and retained the connection after moving to New Bern on conclusion of his service. A successful merchant, businessman, and owner of lands in the area, he also acted as Clerk of the Superior Court of Craven County, an appointment granted in 1788. A man with a successful business career and a responsible civic office would naturally wish to convey an appearance of substance and respectability, and a home, however modest, located on a principal street in New Bern would serve the purpose well. Active in community life during Washington's "Southern Tour" in 1791, Samuel Chapman "waited upon" the President, representing St. John's Masonic Lodge.

Chapman's will, read in 1807, listed an extensive inventory of household furnishings,

and 21 slaves working on his plantation outside New Bern. An entry of "about 25 Gallons of Brandy" hints at the lifestyle of the times. On the death of Chapman's widow Katherine, the daughter Caroline and her husband Henry P. Waring owned the house, and in 1834 they sold to Isaac Taylor, a prominent businessman and banker. On the marriage of his daughter Mary to George Sitgreaves Attmore, Taylor generously gave the home to the couple, but retained the title himself. Enlargement of the structure to a three story center hall plan is believed to have begun the same year. The Sitgreaves family, George's mother's people, were well-known New Bernians, while the Attmores had Philadelphia roots and were prominent citizens there. A priceless portrait of George Attmore, Sr., hangs in the parlor today.

In 1860 the property passed into the hands of Hannah Taylor Attmore Oliver and her husband William Hollister Oliver. In 1880 Mrs. Oliver's surviving daughters and a son received the property through her will. Mary Taylor Oliver lived in the house until her death in 1951. "Miss Mary", as she was fondly known to most New Bernians, is reputed to have taken the daring step of smoking a cigarette in public at the corner of New and Middle Streets, imparting a great shock to the community.

Left by Miss Mary's will to five nephews, the Huske family of Fayetteville, the house was purchased from them by the Historical Society in 1953 after some negotiation. Extensive restoration work, necessitated by 150 years of continuous occupation, began almost immediately. The NEW BERN MIRROR of June 23, 1961, gave a concise account of the renovation efforts.

"UGLY AND FORLORN", began the caption below the 1953 photo, "Broken windows and a dingy exterior gave the neglected Attmore-Oliver House a haunted look Interested in preserving its past, the New Bern Historical Society

visualized better things for the old residence, and purchased it for \$30,000. Assuming such an obligation was a bold move for the 40 members, who were aware that the Society had little more than \$200 in its treasury." Faith and vision paid off.



Attmore-Oliver House, 1953. Photo by Billy Benners.

A second picture, taken in 1961, showed the house much as it is today, with the caption, "RESTORED TO BEAUTY--Because somebody cared--in this instance the New Bern Historical Society--the Attmore-Oliver House got a new lease on life. So did the Society. It now has 250 names on roll, and property assets at the end of 1960 of \$53,823.12."

Over the past quarter century restorations and additions have been carried out almost continuously. In the 1953 photo a metal roof is

evident, and this has been replaced by authentic cedar shakes. A brickwork-supported picket fence now surrounds the front garden, separating it from a widened Broad Street.

The value of the Attmore-Oliver House to the Society and to the community at large cannot be stated in terms of money alone. As a center of activities and public tours it is an outstanding place in the life of present-day New Bern. Business conferences, committee meetings, social gatherings, and wedding receptions are but a few of the events held in an atmosphere filled with the grace and charm of a bygone era. The foresight and dedication of 40 Society members with a stake of only \$200 in hand, has been fully justified in 35 years of community use.

"WHEN SORROWS COME"—A TUSCARORA SAGA

Audrey Mellevoid

When Columbus thought he had found India, he called the people "Indios" which, translated from Spanish, meant Indians. The so-called "New World" Columbus discovered was not new to the nations dwelling herein, for they had discovered the Americas thousands of years before.

There is no way of knowing just how many Indians lived in North Carolina before the arrival of the white man. But history tells us that when Giovanni da Verrazano sailed along the coast of Carolina in 1524 under the French flag, he "saw everywhere very great fires by reason of the multitude of the inhabitants". Ralph Lane, who explored for Sir Walter Raleigh, wrote "the continent is of a huge and unknown greatness and very well peopled and towned".

The American Indian was not just a single breed whose ancestors emigrated en masse from Asia. They came from widely different sources in the Old World, often centuries apart. There are recorded tribes with varying skin colors ranging from almost black to ashen, olive, terra cotta, blonde and brown. Some have an Oriental appearance, while the Algonquins are without doubt Semites, according to Elizabeth L. Coombs.

When our European forebears landed in North Carolina, they came in contact with Indians who spoke several totally different languages. These Indians belonged to numerous heterogeneous tribes and villages. They were, in fact, not unlike the separate nations of Europe. The languages of the native Carolinians were divided into three families--Algonquian, Siouan, and

Iroquoian. The speakers of the Algonquian language dwelt primarily along the coast, north of the Cape Fear region. Those who spoke Siouan lived in the Cape Fear region and the piedmont. The nations speaking Iroquoian lived in between also on the coastal plain and in the western mountains. Within those families many different languages were spoken by people who very often did not understand each other. For example, those speaking only Iroquoian Cherokee were not able to converse with or understand the Iroquoian Tuscarora.

The history of the American Indian is tragically prejudiced, based erroneously upon information of "ethnocentric Europeans"--people who were biased in their own ways of thinking and doing things.

The word Tuscarora means "hemp gatherers". The tribe was regarded by some as "kind, peaceable, ingenious and industrious"--until they were hastily degraded by the colonists who wantonly and willfully confiscated their lands. Just as the Puritans of New England failed to recognize the Indians' rights to their land, so too the colonists of North Carolina usurped the lands of the Tuscarora without any thought of purchase. It was not surprising that the unjust conduct of the colonists finally provoked the Tuscarora and awakened in the minds of those erstwhile amiable people jealousy and distrust that ultimately ripened into a hatred which led to reprisal and resistance.

John Lawson in his diary, speaking of the Tuscarora said, "They were really better to us than we have been to them; they always freely give us of their victuals and take care we are armed against hunger and thirst; we trade with them and daily cheat them in everything we sell, and esteem it a gift of Christianity not to sell to them so cheap as we do to the Christians, as we call ourselves". Not long after, John Lawson was put to death by that very tribe; but then

Mr. Lawson wasn't always honorable to them either.

It was not only confiscation of their lands or the manner in which they had been cheated that were the prime causes for concern on the part of the Tuscarora. For sixty years prior to the so-called Tuscarora War (1711-1713) their young had been kidnapped and sold into slavery in the northern colonies. This was the true cause of the Tuscarora War, and overlooked by most historians. In 1710, more than a year before the famous massacre, the Tuscarora petitioned the Provincial Government of Pennsylvania to come to their aid. (By now the Indians of Pennsylvania were concerned at the kidnapping of their brethren.) On June 8, 1710, the governor and Provincial Council sent two commissioners to meet the Tuscarora emissaries who were found in the presence of four Conestoga chiefs and Opessa, the chief of the Shawnee. Their petition is a poignant one, metaphorically as well as diplomatically. Basically they sought refuge in the Philadelphia Colony, begging for a "cessation from murdering and taking them so that thereafter they would not fear a mouse, or anything that ruffles the leaves". At this time there had been no hostility on the part of the Tuscarora. They wanted to maintain peace, but above all they wanted a cessation of the kidnapping and selling into slavery of their people. To that end they were willing to forsake the only home they had ever known. Without a certificate from the government they wished to leave, the Pennsylvanians would not help them, fearing they might fall out of favor with the English. However, their pitiful messages had been heard by members of the Five Nations in Canada who would later take steps to aid the long suffering Tuscaroras.

It had been a custom with the Tuscaroras to visit the north every five to eight years. They

would travel in small groups, proving they were not a threat to anyone, carrying treasures not available in Canada--wampum shells. Several thousand of them would travel as soon as spring arrived, and they walked all the way to the "land of the Five Nations" where they would feast together and exchange gifts. When winter was about to arrive, they would trek home to harvest crops which had been planted before they left. Those crops had been cared for by the elderly or those not strong enough to travel the distance to Canada.

It was about this time that Baron de Graffenried, a Swiss nobleman, was looking for land for his people who had left Switzerland and were arriving in the port of Philadelphia. History records that de Graffenried was approached "by a rascally Englishman who said he had just the land the Baron might like". He further added the land "had once belonged to some Indians, but they had left North Carolina and had moved far to the north". What de Graffenried saw was Chattawka, "the point of land between the Neuse and Trent Rivers that subsequently became the sight of New Bern". De Graffenried complained that the Surveyor General, John Lawson, was "dishonest for having charged him a heavy price for it, and for the consequences of his not knowing that Lawson had no title to the land and that the place was still inhabited by Indians although the Surveyor General had attested the land was free of encumbrances and unoccupied".

Lawson had to have known the thousand and more Tuscarora would soon return from the north. He conspired with other Indians (probably Cherokee and Catawba) to take the few Tuscarora who had remained at home and sell them into slavery in the West Indies. When the tribe arrived from the north and found what had happened, they did the only thing they could. When the fighting ceased, approximately seventy

innocent Swiss were dead. Both Lawson and de Graffenried were carried off by the Tuscarora and questioned by them. The Baron was released, but the "rascally Englishman was tortured to death".

The New Bern massacre was an unavoidably dreadful tragedy. Some say there was conspiracy on the part of other Indian tribes to destroy the Tuscaroras. History records that "Colonel Barnwell and his Indian allies and troops came up from South Carolina and taught the Tuscarora a lesson". The tribe had been estimated to number between 1200 and 6000. When Barnwell's attack ended, 900 Tuscarora were dead, others were maimed, and many were sold into slavery.

When it was all over, the Tuscarora knew their way of life was ended. In 1713 they petitioned the Five Nations to permit the survivors to become the Sixth Nation. A few at a time, over the next 90 years, emigrated--some to the Susquehanna area, others to the Ramapo Mountains of New Jersey where their descendants are a distinctly ethnic group, no longer existing as Indians; still others settled in Niagara. Today the Sixth Nation, the Tuscarora of Canada and New York State, is still in existence.

Nearly 80 years after the Tuscarora War, Red Jacket, chief of the Seneca Indians, an eloquent orator rather than a fighter, who had spent his lifetime trying to preserve the Indians' rights, said, "We stand a small Island in the bosom of the great waters... They rise, they press upon us and the waves will settle over us and we shall disappear forever. Who then lives to mourn us, White Man? None."

BELLAIR PLANTATION--NEW BERN'S "TARA"

Tom Thompson

The powerful and nostalgic emotions which were evoked by GONE WITH THE WIND are probably best documented by the fact that the movie is still the all-time top box office show. While many first-time visitors to the South expect to find a "Tara" on every corner, the sad fact, at least from an architectural and historic standpoint, is that very few remain standing today. There are only a handful in eastern North Carolina, so it is particularly noteworthy that we have an excellent example of a plantation house right here in Craven County.

Bellair, as it has been known since Revolutionary times, is the only plantation-style structure left in Craven County, and because it is a private residence, it is still somewhat obscure, at least in the public's mind, when compared to Hope Plantation in Windsor or Orton Plantation in Wilmington, to use two better-known examples.

Located on Washington Post Road a few miles west of present-day New Bern, the structure itself was begun in 1760 by the Spaight family. It was finished, however, by Wilson Blount in about 1780. This has led to some misperception on the part of several authors who claim it was built in 1780, although the letter accompanying this article clearly shows that it was in use in 1776. It was acquired by the Richardson family in 1838 and is currently occupied by Graham Richardson, so it truly can be said that it is an ancestral home. Andrew Richardson, who married Elizabeth McKay, originally came from



BELLAIR PLANTATION HOUSE TODAY RISES MAJESTICALLY ABOVE CORNFIELDS OUTSIDE NEW BERN. Photo by Tom Thompson.

Pennsylvania and it was his son John who acquired the house in the nineteenth century.

The relative lack of plantation homes in North Carolina is generally blamed on the combined efforts of General Ambrose Burnside, our resident Union general, and General George T. Sherman, who swept through North Carolina on his way to Georgia. The fact that this particular edifice escaped the wrath of the conquering Northern forces is noteworthy in itself. The document responsible is still in the house and takes the form of a safeguard granted to John Richardson by Ambrose Burnside on March 20, 1862. There is no mention within the document or within the literature researched explaining why the safeguard was granted, but it states in no uncertain terms that the property, the family of John Richardson, and the plantation itself were to be secure from any transgressions on the part of the Northern forces.

The building itself has a hipped roof, is constructed of brick, "7 bays long" and much of the craftsmanship inside is similar to that found in the Stanly House, suggesting that the same craftsmen were responsible for the construction. The following letter was written to one Elizabeth Murphrey, who resided in Dobbs, North Carolina, near Snow Hill, by her daughter-in-law, Mary Murphrey, who was the wife of John Murphrey, Jr. John Murphrey, Sr., was the GR-GR-GR-GR-GR-grandfather of County Attorney Jim Sugg. The letter, written from Bellair Plantation, was perhaps mundane as far as the writer was concerned, but many of the disclosures make compelling reading to a stranger from the twentieth century. Death from fever (probably yellow fever) was a way of life in eighteenth century New Bern, and this letter brings that home forcefully to us once again. There are also some interesting comments regarding the "frictions" of married life, the

death of young children, and the impact that the Revolutionary War would have on the economy.

I am indebted to Jim Sugg and "Miss Natalie" Sugg for their help in providing a copy of the letter below as well as being extremely helpful to the research.

Belare near Newbern
19 Octr. 1776

Dear Madam

I am greatly saddened by the news of the fever on Contentny. William brot the news when he came to this place with his family. Johnnie was so much affected by the death of his dear Sister Gail as to be unable to eat or sleep for near a forte night. Both his health & his business have suffered from this condition. She above all others in this world was his true soul mate & confidant. He prays greatly that Lanie and Jethra recovered & were not taken also. I am quite well tho fat with child yet. John has removed me to this place for fear of the outbreak of fever in the town and to escape the Heats there which are greater than any I can remember for this season of the Year. The countrie round bouts is very pleasant & healthie and the house elegant and new. Mr. Blount is quite nice and much the tease and his Lady indeed an ornament to his house. Taken separately they are accomplished and enjoyable company but the friction that exist between them as man and wife can make them quite uncomfortable to be with at times. They were kind enough to prepare for me a room below stairs. I am so plumb now that I can hardly rise from my chair let alone try to walk stairs. But it is only a small inconvenience when one thinks of the great pleasure god grants us by

children. And yet, when thinking on Gail it is hard to understand why god should grant us such a gift only to take it so shortly from us. Everyone about town is up for freedom. John is still of two minds. This independancy is sweet indeed but he fears war will destroy our trade or atleast cripple it to the extent of economic ruin for the Province. I can but wonder what condition the world will be in when my child enters it. Johnnie has spoken of sending to the Northward for a stone marker for Gail and swears he will do so if matters do not worsen. Madame, I pray god to protect you & your family & deliver them from future pain and sickness.

My wishes and prayers to all.

Your Loving daughter,

Mary

Mrs. Elizabeth Murphrey
the Beare Garden
Dobbs, N. C.

CELEBRATING NEW BERN IN PAGEANTRY AND PARADES

Mary Osborne Conover

Give New Bernians reason to celebrate and we'll do it in style!

In the 1850's, we danced in the streets to welcome the extension of the railroad from Raleigh.

At the turn of the century, we celebrated New Bern's agricultural and industrial preeminence with a series of spectaculars at fairgrounds on George Street. In February 1897, for example, we whooped it up at a Fish, Oyster & Game Fair.

Timber undoubtedly was the major contributor to the prosperity of the community at the time. But lumber was only one of several industries lending stability through financial support. Commercial fishing and truck farming did, too, spurred by the rail service that made New Bern a major port for shipping seafood and produce to markets up north.

But we digress. Our subject is parades and celebrations, and the most important were yet to come--linked not to the city's present at the time each occurred, but to the historic past of a town known in its early days as "The Athens of North Carolina".

Recalling that New Bern was founded in 1710, in 1910 you'd expect a 200th birthday salute. Indeed, from July 25 to 30 of that year, there was a rouser--complete with a Great Historical Pageant on Land and Water, Beautiful Floral and Industrial Parades, a Grand Display of Fireworks on the Water, an Exhibition of Historic Relics, and more: Firemen's Tournament

Contests and Races.

That New Bern's Bi-Centennial Celebration and the State Firemen's Association 23rd Annual Convention coincided is consistent with one among many of our turn-of-century claims to fame. In pumper contests and for hose laying, our stalwart firefighters set numerous world records!

Why 1910 was a year of parades and pumper contests, one wonders not. Why the next such event occurred in 1929, however, does raise a question: Of what significance is a 219th birthday?

Answer: It was the tenor of the times, not the date, that prompted so impressive a party.

As John B. Green, III, points out in A NEW BERN ALBUM, New Bern was growing. The war in Europe had been satisfactorily concluded and business was booming. The local Chamber of Commerce was touting the area as "The Land of Enchanting Waters" and "The New Newport of the South" where outstanding yachting, fishing, and hunting were available the year around. New Bern was promoted as the ideal place to live, work, and invest.

"Perhaps with a realization that something valuable was being left behind," Green observes, "New Bernians began to develop a renewed interest in their past. The New Bern Historical Society was formed, and in June 1929 an elaborate pageant was held which celebrated the long history of the town." Its glory, fortunately, was undiminished by an event of later date: the great stock market crash.

THOUSANDS TO SEE NEW BERN PAGEANT

Will Commemorate Important Events

In History of Town and State

GOVERNOR GARDNER TO BE HONOR GUEST

Swiss Minister and Members of Congressional
Committee Will Also Attend: Many of Residents
Will Wear Colonial Costumes for Occasion

Thus did THE NEW BERNIAN headline a lead story anticipating the historical celebration and pageant.

Thousands were expected to attend, and thousands did, including (as forecast) Governor O. Max Gardner and Mrs. Gardner, the Swiss Minister, members of Congress and of state legislative committees. Descendants of Baron Christopher de Graffenried gathered from throughout the world for a first reunion.

On Tuesday, June 11, the governor was greeted by a cannon salute, opening the public program at 10:30 a. m. Driven through the streets in an antique carriage, he was welcomed at the John Wright Stanly home by Mayor-Elect Hubert Tolson, dressed to represent Mayor Joseph Leech as he welcomed President Washington to New Bern in 1791. Pathe, Fox, and M-G-M all made talking moving pictures of the scene, during which New Bernians had been cautioned in advance by THE NEW BERNIAN that "absolute quiet must be maintained".

At 11:00 a. m. a parade began to move from George and Pollock Streets through the business and riverfront residential section. Vying for a total of \$200 in prize monies, floats--all non-commercial--made the parade a pageant in itself, portraying such historical subjects as the trial of Lawson and de Graffenried by the Tuscarora Indians, the removal of cannon from Tryon Palace, the Edenton tea party, and the first printing press.

In the line of march were marshals on horseback, Cherokee Indians, the Sudan patrol, the American Legion drum corps, the Fort Bragg band, Boy Scouts, city officials, fire

department equipment, covered wagons, springless wagons, ox carts, Tommy Tucker and his Atlantic Beach orchestra (to play that evening at a colonial ball), and the crews of the Coast Guard cutters Apache and Pamlico--the latter "in gala attire" joining patrol boats, yachts, decorated motor boats, and, at anchor offshore, the seaplane that delivered dignitaries from the nation's capital.

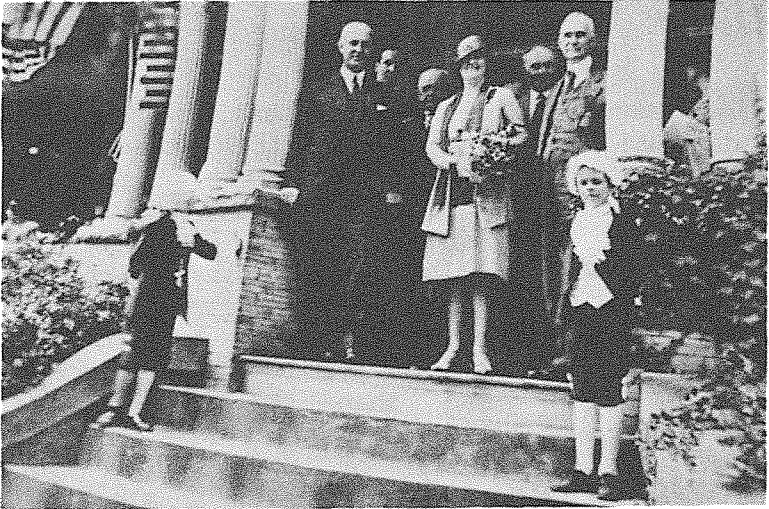
In short, history was being remade. "So far as is possible the colonial atmosphere of the town will be restored," promised THE NEW BERNIAN. "Numbers of residents will wear colonial costumes. Band members and police officers will wear colonial hats. Store windows will display colonial relics. The historical motif will predominate in the morning parade, open house, historical pageant and colonial ball."

Costumed town criers were stationed at main business corners "to make important announcements", and town clerks were stationed at New Bern's portals to invite guests to register in old-fashioned ledgers as a permanent file for the city. There were, in addition, Swiss souvenir vendors.

From 4:00 to 5:30 p. m., 14 colonial homes--each with an American flag and a soldier stationed outside--were open to visitors. Buffet suppers were scheduled at six; and at eight, "New Bern in Historical Review" commenced in Kafer Park.

Rhapsodically reported by THE NEW BERNIAN as "one of the most unique and effective productions of the kind ever given in the state", the pageant was witnessed by a crowd of 8000.

Written by Mrs. William Hilton and directed by Miss Olive Jackson of New York, it was under the general chairmanship of Mrs. Richard Nixon Duffy, president of the Historical Society, with Miss Gertrude Carraway her assistant.



Gov. and Mrs. O. Max Gardner celebrate with New Bernians in 1929. Photo from Smallwood Scrapbook courtesy of John Green.

"Elaborately and artistically presented" by a cast of a thousand, it recalled events of local, state, and national importance, mainly from about 1770 to 1791.

"Rarely are such talent and beauty so well combined with historical accuracy as were noticeable last night," raved THE NEW BERNIAN. Beginning with a prologue showing the amalgamation of the nationalities in the settlement of New Bern, the pageant continued through a ball at Tryon Palace, the first Provincial Congress in 1774, and the meeting of the committee on safety in 1775, with the subsequent ousting of Royal Governor Josiah Martin from the town.

A fourth episode depicting the first State Assembly at New Bern in April 1777 was followed by the visit of Washington, reproducing his welcome and a banquet in his honor at Tryon Palace. A brief "processional" of the years 1800-1918 ensued.

The pageant's entire cast appeared in the

final scene, symbolizing the past, present, and future of New Bern. The spirit of the cypress tree was superseded by the spirit of America, flanked by the spirit of North Carolina and the spirit of New Bern. The great forces of Religion, Education, Labor, Industry, Art, and other great factors were all represented.

It was a glorious occasion, indeed, this celebration in the year 1929. Though reported to be less grand than the Bi-Centennial Celebration of 1910, and possibly less ambitious than the celebration of New Bern's 250th birthday in 1960, its place in the annals of the city is special: It was the first contributor to the restoration of Tryon Palace.

Long interested in such a possibility, Mrs. William N. Reynolds of Winston-Salem agreed in 1929 to underwrite the cost of producing that year's pageant with the stipulation that any surplus monies would be returned to her. The \$3500 she received was later returned to New Bern and kept in trust until the restoration of the palace became a reality in the late 1950's.

Now THAT was a celebration, the official opening of Tryon Palace to the public on April 8, 1959! But that is another story.

HISTORICAL PROFILE: JAMES DAVIS

Charlotte and Jack Breytspraak

We wondered, as we set about selecting a subject for this inaugural issue, where should one begin. As this is a publishing venture it struck us that it would be appropriate and, hopefully, interesting to identify and write about an early printer or publisher. But, could such a person's existence be clearly documented. And, if so, were there interesting, illuminative illustrations of his character; specific activities that would flesh out that character and bring the reader into contact with a person as differentiated from a mere chronicling of historical facts. It turned out that there was documentation as well as background information in abundance. James Davis (1721-1785) was an interesting, interested, complex person as well as the first printer in New Bern.

James Davis was born in Virginia on October 21, 1721. There is no information available on his early life but by 1749 he was living in Williamsburg. On April 14 of that year he was appointed to the post of Public Printer by the North Carolina General Assembly held in New Bern. He set up shop on Pollock Street in June, later moving to Broad Street. His primary responsibility was to publish official documents of the Assembly including the laws. He was also responsible for printing currency. In his first year he produced North Carolina's first imprint, *THE JOURNAL OF THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES*.

Beyond this official work, Davis also became involved in other printing ventures. He printed books and pamphlets but most importantly, he

started North Carolina's first newspaper, the **NORTH CAROLINA GAZETTE**, in July 1751. This was a risky venture. There was little commerce, thus, there was little need for advertising. The population was primarily rural, disinterested, and often illiterate. There was no regular post, making distribution a problem. Nonetheless he kept the paper going, on and off, and under various names, until his death in 1785. Usually in a four-page format and issued weekly, it covered primarily outside news and included feature stories ranging from romance tales to the expanded obituary of a 112-year-old woman in Derbyshire, England, who had perished after a tree limb from which she had plucked a fruit fell and broke her arm.

Davis had a contentious personality which put him at odds with many of his fellow New Bernians. His first noteworthy "set-to" was with no less a personage than Arthur Dobbs, the Colonial Governor, who in 1764 refused to reappoint Davis public printer "upon account of negligence". This was not the first time that Davis had been charged with less than optimum performance; in 1752 the Speaker of the House charged him with "omissions and neglects in sending the newly printed laws to the Counties, as was his duty". Davis had countered this charge by insisting that he had indeed sent the laws but not by special messenger as his salary, only about half what other colonial printers received, could not justify such expense. The situation in 1764 was more significant in that it embroiled Davis in a political dispute between the Colonial Assembly and the Royal Governor. As a result of Dobbs's refusal to reappoint him, a committee of the Assembly selected one Andrew Steuart of Philadelphia as a replacement. However, the bill of appointment was defeated whereupon Dobbs then appointed Steuart "his majestys printer". This outraged the Assembly which denounced the appointment as

"a violent stretch of power" and in turn appointed Davis Public Printer after providing a 100-pound stipend for Steuart for his trouble and expense.

Davis was a strong supporter of the revolution and he used his publications in behalf of that effort. However, this did not prevent him from displays of temper if the cause of the new government ran counter to his own interests. He objected bitterly to the anchoring of an armed ship in the Neuse River near a plantation he owned, claiming the crew were drunk and rowdy and that they were raiding his cornfields. This despite the fact that the ship had been fitted out by North Carolinians and that the crew had been characterized as merely "healthy men all anxious to adventure". He also became embroiled with a French officer in 1778 who had been granted the right to recruit a regiment from among French settlers in New Bern. One of those recruited was an apprentice of John Davis, James Davis's son, a ship captain. Davis, together with his son and some twenty seamen from the son's ship, marched to the regiment's quarters and abused and threatened the French officer. Insults were also hurled at prominent New Bernians who had failed to support him in this effort.

These defects of personality did not prevent Davis from an active public life. In 1753 he became a member of the county court. In 1754 he was elected sheriff of Craven County. He served in the Assembly from 1755 to 1760. In 1755 he was appointed Postmaster of New Bern by Benjamin Franklin and in 1768 he became justice of the peace in New Bern, an office he held until 1778. During the revolution he was a member of the Council of Safety in New Bern and climaxed his political career by becoming a member of the Council of State in 1781.

The James Davis House at 211 Broad Street is the only visible reminder of New Bern's first

printer. There is some question about the authenticity of the house itself largely because of a letter to the Earl of Hillsborough from Thomas Howe, collector of the port of New Bern. In this letter, which reported on a fierce storm that had struck the area, he said that "Mr Davis's house [is] a mere wreck". There is little question, however, that the lot was owned by Davis. Presumably the house is at least representative and thus can stand as a memorial to a colorful, multi-dimensional man who had a significant impact on New Bern and North Carolina.

SAINT PETER'S A. M. E. ZION CHURCH

Barbara W. Howlett

Saint Peter's A. M. E. Zion Church has its roots in New York City. In 1796, as a protest against discrimination, a group of freedmen left the white Methodist Episcopal Church to which they had belonged to start a church of their own. This group, under the leadership of James Varick, often met in the New York workshop of William Miller, and from this humble beginning the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was born.

In 1863 the A. M. E. Zion Church, which had flourished for many years in the north, turned its eyes south. At the New England Conference, Bishop J. J. Clinton appointed the Reverend James W. Hood as a missionary to North Carolina. On January 20, 1863, the Reverend Hood arrived in New Bern, North Carolina, where he found a well-established congregation connected with the Southern Methodist Church; it was called at this time St. Andrew's Chapel. The church unanimously voted to unite with the Zion connection and became the first A. M. E. Zion Church in the south, the Mother Church of southern Zion Methodism. On December 17, 1864, the North Carolina Conference was organized at this church with Bishop J. J. Clinton as its founding prelate. In 1879 the name was changed from St. Andrew's Chapel to St. Peter's A. M. E. Zion Church.

The frame building in which the congregation was worshipping had a handsome central tower visible the length of Queen Street. Although the cornerstone reads 1879, it appears on the



SAINT PETER'S A. M. E. ZION CHURCH STANDS RESTORED AND ENLARGED AFTER THE FIRE OF 1922. Photo by Jim Gunn.

Sanborn Insurance Maps for the first time in 1908. The structure was brick veneered in 1914 and renovated into an imposing Gothic-inspired edifice. Unfortunately it was devastated by the disastrous fire of December 1922. (Photographs of the ruins may be seen at the Firemen's Museum in New Bern.) In 1923 the Reverend H. L. Holt came as pastor and laid the present church's foundation over the basement of the former structure. Meanwhile the basement walls of the parish dining hall adjacent to the west were roofed over the served as a temporary meeting place. In 1925 the parsonage was built also on the west. For over 17 years this congregation struggled to rebuild what it had lost so swiftly in 1922. It was not until the tenure of the Reverend E. J. McIver in 1940 that the new church building was completed, and on Easter morning of that year the congregation paraded triumphantly into the new structure.

The church has thirty-foot ceilings, stained glass windows, and simple but elegant woodwork and pews which are lovingly cared for. After many years of use, age took its toll and repairs became imperative. Holes in the roof and ceiling allowed not only rain damage, but an occasional unauthorized winged visitor to services. With the help of a Kellenberger grant and much work by the parishioners and the current pastor the Reverend Granville Burnette, the plaster ceiling was replaced, painting, plastering, and other repairs were completed; and in October of 1986, after the sanctuary had been closed for repairs for several months, the triumphal march of 1940 was recreated and the renovated church was again opened to joyful worshippers.

The parishioners of St. Peter's A. M. E. Zion Church are justly proud of their church and its place in the history of New Bern as well as its importance in the history of A. M. E. Zionism. Their motto, appropriate to a

community steeped in history, is "We respect the past, consecrate the present, have faith in the future, and above all protect our heritage."

OLD TOWNS

J. Gaskill McDaniel

I love old towns, where memories
Like climbing ivy cling;
And stardust from a golden past
Is found on everything.
Where little children, bright of eye,
Are taught to fear the rule,
While sitting at the self same desk
That Grandma used in school.
I love each street, that knows the steps
Of men both rich and poor;
The faltering man, with heavy heart,
The gay man, strong and sure.
Give me the homes where bits of light
Come trickling thru a door;
Just as a million other beams
Have tumbled out before.
Yes, old things get into your soul,
And build a lasting shrine;
That's why I'll cherish 'til I die
This lovely town of mine.

Written with the town of New Bern in mind, OLD TOWNS is taken from a collection of poems by Mr. McDaniel. It is reprinted here with permission of Mrs. J. Gaskill McDaniel.

BOOK REVIEW

A HISTORY OF NEW BERN AND CRAVEN COUNTY by Alan D. Watson. (New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1987. Notes, bibliography, index. 746 p., \$25.00.)

The reviewer approaching this heavy volume is faced with a formidable task. A book of this length with its wealth of detail is not easily digested. The author's approach to the subject was, apparently, to leave no stone unturned in his research, and to leave no incident, no matter how small, out of the final text. The finished volume is obviously the result of many years of painstaking research, and the mass of information is almost overwhelming. Dr. Watson is an accomplished sleuth.

Covering the period from 1700 to 1900, the contents are divided into five sections beginning in the Colonial Era and ending with Modernization of the Town and County. An Epilogue covers the twentieth century. The minutely detailed footnotes cover 50 pages, and the bibliography an additional 20 pages. The index, beginning with Charles L. Abernethy, and ending with the Zuniga Map of 1608 extends to more than 60 pages. Unfortunately the index proves difficult to use in some instances. The heading "Ships, ship building, and ocean-coastal-river navigation and commerce" lists an innumerable series of pages, four column inches in length, making it difficult to find a specific name or reference easily. Other generalities of indexing are also confusing and time consuming to use. Over 50 black and white illustrations complete the presentation.

Opening the book for the first time I expected to find a narrative rendition of New Bern's long and dynamic history, but found that the author had chosen an entirely different approach. The decision to relate almost every facet of the past in a series of factual incidents, rather than weaving the incidents into a contextual story seems to have been taken for academic reasons rather than popular appeal. This approach gives the book both strengths and weaknesses. Instead of a colorful tale we are faced with a volume which resembles a lengthy research paper. If Dr. Watson intended the work to be a source of information for future writers and students, then he has succeeded.

There is little doubt, however, that this long-awaited work will have strong appeal to residents of New Bern, Craven County, and many parts of the state. Those with roots, particularly those whose connections are of long duration, will very likely find mention of forebears whether they are legislators, storekeepers or firemen. The range of subject matter is so broad that it defies simple description. An example is the inclusion of details of uniforms to be worn by black regiments recruited during the Civil War. Another is a new firefighting budget proposed by the city after one of the many fires that plagued New Bern.

The average reader will find that the host of details reveals many new insights, but might be somewhat confused as the text darts from subject to subject. In one paragraph devoted to elections, there is also mention of shipping and ship cargoes, which seems out of context. A number of similar instances occurs throughout the book. There are also several cases of repetition, where sentences or several sentences appear again a few pages later. A firm handed editor would have eliminated these redundancies and produced a more readable result. I believe

that skillful editing could have produced a more satisfactory work with a considerable reduction in size and greater appeal to a wider audience.

A highlight of the work, at least to this reviewer, is the coverage of the role of New Bern during the Civil War. Here the author has revealed his ability to place incidents in a contextual framework with gratifying results. In fact the story of the occupation of New Bern could have been a very viable short volume on its own. Other events that had a great influence on the city are not given the same considered treatment however. The great fire of 1922 where the people of New Bern suffered cruelly at the hands of fate is dismissed in less than a paragraph. This horrible conflagration, which destroyed much of New Bern, undoubtedly had a greater influence on the present appearance of New Bern than any other single incident in the entire history. Another case of poor index compilation is evident here; the 1922 fire actually appears on page 594, but 594 does not appear under the category "Fires and firefighting".

Alan Watson's work has contributed enormously to the fund of historical knowledge that has been accumulated over many years. Future writers are enabled, from the compilation of research revealed in the book, to further enlarge our enjoyment of New Bern's past.

Jim Gunn